The CHAMPION of the REGIMENT

EVERETT·T·TOMLINSON

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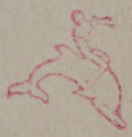
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LEAVING NOAH FAST BOUND AND ALONE (p. 36)

THE CHAMPION OF THE REGIMENT

A Story of the Siege of Yorktown

BY

EVERETT T. TOMLINSON

Author of "The Rider of the Black Horse," "The Boys of Old Monmouth," "The Camp Fire of Mad Anthony," "Four Boys in the Yellowstone," etc., etc.

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From drawings by J. Harold Cue

THE CHAMPION OF THE REGIMENT

CHAPTER I

SMART ARCHIE'S DINNER

"I-I-I-F y-y-o-ou think I s-s-stutter, y-you o-ought t-t-to have h-heard us w-when w-we were a-at Smart A-a-archie's y-yesterday."

"What were you doing there?"

"H-h-having s-some r-roast p-pig."

"Did you talk any?"

"W-we t-tried t-to s-say something, b-but e-every time o-one of u-us b-began, t-the others all s-stopped e-e-eating t-to w-watch t-the m-m-man g-go through t-the m-m-motions."

"Did n't you have any of the roast pig?"

"T-trust m-me f-f-for t-that! T-there w-was n't e-enough o-of t-the l-little porker l-left when we were d-d-done t-to m-make a s-s-squeal of."

"How did you manage it?"

"W-we 'd t-t-talk a w-while a-and t-then

we 'd a-all g-g-give it up and g-g-go t-to w-work on t-the r-r-roast p-p-p-"

"Yes, I think I understand," laughed Noah Dare, as his companion's contortions, in his efforts to express himself, became more strenuous than before. "You would eat awhile and then talk; then you 'd talk and give your whole time to that before you went on with your feasting."

"T-t-t-that 's it," replied George Baker, the stammerer. "I b-b-believe S-smart Archie d-did i-it on p-p-purpose."

"Did what on purpose?"

"G-got t-together a-all t-the b-boys t-that s-s-stutter. He m-must have g-gone over t-the whole c-c-county. I d-d-did n't know h-h-half t-the b-boys there."

"How many were there?"

"T-t-t-t-"

"You mean two?" laughed Noah, interrupting the stammerer.

"N-n-no! I d-d-don't m-mean t-t-t-t-"

"Well, what do you mean?"

"J-j-just w-what I was t-t-telling you. There were t-t-t-"

"Twenty?"

"N-no! There were o-only t-t-t-t-"

"Ten?"

George nodded his head vigorously as he replied, "T-t-that 's w-what I s-said, d-d-did n't I?"

"And every one stammered?"

"Y-you 're c-correct. Some of t-those b-b-boys j-just g-got up f-from t-the t-t-table and t-turned around t-to f-f-face t-the wall w-when t-they w-wanted t-t-to ask f-for some m-more p-p-pig."

"Why did they do that?"

"B-because it was e-e-easier t-to t-talk when t-they d-did n't have any b-body watching t-t-their j-jaws," laughed George good-naturedly.

"Did they get more pork?"

"C-course t-they d-did. Smart Archie f-fed us high t-till t-t-the l-little p-porker was a-all g-gone."

"Did he laugh?"

"N-no. He n-never c-cracked a s-s-smile. I r-reckon y-you all d-don't k-know him or you w-would n't a-ask t-that question."

"I 've never seen him but two or three times. I 've heard he is a great joker. Is that the reason why he is called 'Smart' Archie?"

"I r-r-reckon so. D-did you all e-ever hear a-about his d-deaf party?"

"No. What was that?"

"He h-had a p-party f-for d-deaf men o-one t-t-time, a-at least a-all t-the g-guests t-thought every one was d-deaf except himself. T-there were s-seven p-p-people p-p-present and S-s-smart A-archie had t-told every one t-that he m-must not f-forget that m-most of t-the m-men were d-d-deaf — s-stone d-deaf. He s-said he d-did n't want t-to hurt t-their f-feelings, so if t-the m-man t-to whom he was explaining t-the s-state of affairs would only j-just t-try t-to make t-he p-poor d-deaf man hear he would t-take it as a p-particular f-favor. S-smart Archie t-told every one s-separately t-that s-same s-story — "

"So every one at the table thought he was the only one that was n't deaf, and that he must yell to make the others hear? Was that it?" inquired Noah, the expression of his face betraying his delight at George's tale.

"P-p-precisely."

"Were you there?"

"No, b-but I h-heard it."

"Did Smart Archie tell you about it?"

"He d-did n't have t-to, f-for I was p-passing his place and I s-stopped w-when I h-heard t-the powwow. It s-sounded as if t-the whole p-party w-were t-trying t-to t-t-talk at t-the s-same t-time and every one was afraid he

w-was n't s-speaking l-loudly enough t-to m-m-make t-the others hear him."

"Great! That beats the stammerers' party." Noah Dare threw back his head and laughed as the vision of the dinner party arose before him. "Was n't there one deaf man at the table?" he asked.

"N-not one."

"What did they say when they found out they had all been hoaxed?"

"N-nothing, I r-reckon. You see it w-was a c-case where t-the least s-said t-the b-better f-for all."

"Did you know all the other guests were stammerers when you accepted his invitation to have some roast pig?"

"I d-did in a l-l-little w-while," replied George ruefully. "It d-d-did n't t-take very l-long. I said t-to t-the f-fellow next t-to me, 'It 's a p-p-pretty d-day.' I spoke it all r-right too, if I d-d-do s-say s-so myself."

"Well, your friend did n't deny it, did he?" laughed Noah.

"T-t-that 's w-what I 'd l-like t-to know."

"Did n't he respond to your suggestion?"

"He t-tried t-to. I w-watched his chin m-move f-from one c-corner of his f-face t-to another and I was s-so d-delighted t-that I

f-forgot t-to l-listen t-to his c-conversation. I d-don't know y-yet whether or not he a-agreed with m-me."

"You had some roast pig anyway, and that is one consolation."

"I r-reckon t-that's so. Are y-you g-going t-to t-the auction?"

"What auction? Do you mean a vendue?"

"I m-mean t-that S-smart A-archie is g-going t-to have an auction."

"When?"

"T-this evenin'."

"What time?"

"T-two o'clock."

"That is n't 'evening'; you mean two o'clock this afternoon."

"D-do I? I c-can't dispute you."

"That's one advantage you have over me," laughed Noah. "I believe I 'll go to this auction. Of course, you are going?"

"I certainly am. W-when S-smart Archie h-has an auction in t-times l-like t-these yo 'll s-see s-some fun, as s-sure 's yo-yo're b-b-born."

"I 'll go," said Noah promptly. "Where is the auction to be?"

"I 'll s-show you. I'm g-going t-too, you understand."

"Yes, I believe I did understand that much.

All right. I 'll be ready. Don't forget and go without me."

Noah Dare turned away from his companion and entered the rude house in which he with several other young men were quartered. The summer of 1781 was almost gone, and Noah was impatient at the delay in the movements of the men. When the war for independence had begun in earnest, he speedily was found enrolled in one of the companies that were among the devoted and enthusiastic followers of Mad Anthony Wayne.

At the time when Colonel Lee ("Light Horse Harry" as he was familiarly known among the continental soldiers) had been sent south to the aid of General Greene in his campaigns against Lord Cornwallis, General Washington, after consultation with Wayne and various others of his loyal leaders, had selected more than a hundred choice men to go with the dashing cavalry leader to aid in the task that confronted the "Blacksmith from Rhode Island," as Nathanael Greene was sometimes called.

Among those who were thus chosen was young Noah Dare. Only a boy in years, his reputation for sturdy honesty and faithfulness had done almost as much in his selection as

had his success in the field or his prowess in the friendly "rough and terrible" contests of the camp. Noah had become the acknowledged champion wrestler among all the men in Wayne's command—a fact that specially endeared him to Mad Anthony, who was an enthusiastic lover of physical strength and skill.

How well Noah had done his part in the now famous campaign in the Carolinas is no part of this present story. That campaign, however, was ended, and the retreats and "defeats" which Greene and his hardy, determined men had suffered, had so worn the regulars under Cornwallis that the Carolinas had been abandoned by the redcoats, and if they were "subdued," as some of the British reported, their subjection was unlike anything the world ever had seen before. The patriots had become more determined, their bitterness against the Tories and redcoats was more intense, while their activities had shown no decrease.

Virginia had now become the field to which Cornwallis devoted himself. The plan of splitting the colonies asunder which had been formed when John Burgoyne had tried, and failed, as we know, to move with an army from the St. Lawrence to Albany and thence

to New York, had not been entirely abandoned by the followers of King George. When the people of the Carolinas had not flocked to his standard, as Cornwallis had firmly believed they would do when his army withdrew from the coasts and moved inland, and when the same Carolina patriots had not believed they had either been "defeated" or "dispersed," but rather had increased their efforts to thwart the plans of the British, then it was that Virginia was selected by the redcoats as the colony, which, if it could be subdued, would effectually split asunder the thirteen colonies.

The traitor, Benedict Arnold, already had led an army of redcoats into this same colony of Virginia and had burned and ravaged the defenseless people's possessions almost to his heart's content. Lafayette had been sent with a small patriot force into the same region, and the men who had been fighting the invading redcoats in Carolina now were moving northward to the aid of their fellow patriots in Virginia. From the north Mad Anthony Wayne also was to come with his troops, and the prospect of at least as lively a campaign as had been conducted in North and South Carolina was promising.

It is true many of the patriots were becoming almost exhausted by the long struggle for their liberty. Some men were saying that it was useless to make any further attempts. Even the soldiers, at least some of them, had openly rebelled, and declared that they would not fight longer unless they were paid for the services already rendered. Their wives and children were suffering from the lack of food and clothing, the lands were only partly and poorly tilled, and the war apparently was no nearer an end than it had been six years before this time, when the battle of Bunker Hill had thrilled the daring colonists.

These troubles had been settled after a fashion (how active a part had been taken by Mad Anthony in the settlement is now a matter of history), and once more there was a manifestation of determination on the part of the colonies not to abandon the contest.

In North Carolina and Virginia men were gathering and preparing to move northward to join the troops that were already fighting in the latter colony. Grimly the rude soldiers responded to the call, for, though they had learned many things in the course of the struggle, there was still one thing which they

never had learned and did not intend to learn, and that was, — how to give up.

Noah Dare, young and enthusiastic, although he was quiet in his bearing, had stopped in his northward journey to join his comrades under Mad Anthony. Unfamiliar as Noah was with the region, when he arrived at a little hamlet not far from the Virginia line he decided to remain there a few days. The place had been chosen to be one of the rallying places of the militia, and when Noah was assured that the entire body would soon proceed, not much persuading had been required to induce him to remain and join them. He was confident that in his ignorance of the shortest routes he would save much valuable time by proceeding with those who were familiar with the roads.

With several others Noah had been quartered now for three days with an aged man and his wife, whose rude little cabin was placed at their disposal. Among his comrades was George Baker, whose stammering description of the dinner which Smart Archie had given the preceding day, already has been recorded. Smart Archie himself, as Archibald Harden was commonly known, was a young man of twenty-two, whose home was in the

near-by region. He was also the county auctioneer and joker, although, as has already been implied, his manner was most sedate.

A few minutes before two o'clock Noah and George departed from the log house in which they had been quartered to go to the corners or forks, where Smart Archie was to be the auctioneer in a sale that had been looked forward to for days by the people of the vicinity. Both Noah and George expected to be amused by what they would see and hear, but neither was prepared for the intense excitement that arose before the sale was ended.

CHAPTER II

THE AUCTION

When the boys arrived at the place where the auction was to be held, they saw a motley assemblage of thirty or more people there. The sale was to be conducted at the "corners," as the place where two roads crossed was known. A rude platform had been erected for the auctioneer, and Smart Archie was about to ascend to his position upon it when the young soldiers drew near.

"What is he going to sell?" inquired Noah of his companion, as he looked with interest at the assembled buyers.

"I d-don't know," replied George. "It w-will b-b-be g-good fun, whatever it is."

"But half the men here are soldiers."

"That w-will m-make all t-the m-more fun."

Noah was silent for a moment, though his interest in the scene before him was still keen. Several negroes standing near the platform attracted his attention, but as they were all grinning, he did not suspect that they were

drawn to the spot by any other motive than that of curiosity.

"Who is that man?" inquired Noah of his companion, as he beheld a short red-faced man approaching the place. A large bag, filled with some articles, which he thought must be of light weight because the bag seemed to be light, despite its size, was swinging from the man's shoulder.

"I d-don't know," replied George, as he looked keenly at the stranger. Indeed, the man apparently was unknown to all in the assembly, and every one was watching him, for both his appearance and the fact that he was not recognized were sufficient to make all alert. The excitement of the times had made every one suspicious. Even the members of one family were not sure that all their relatives were on the same side in the great struggle which was uppermost in the minds of all.

"Ah, yes," remarked the stranger, as he approached Smart Archie, and swung his burden to the ground. "This is the place where I can dispose of my wares, I am told."

"What do you want to sell?" inquired the auctioneer quietly, as he looked keenly at the stranger.

"Wigs, sir."

"What?"

"Wigs. I came from Hengland a short time ago. Hi 'ad 'eard that wigs were in great demand in the colonies, so I brought with me an hextremely choice hassortment."

The innocence or ignorance of the stranger was so manifest that, despite his calm announcement that he had come from the mother country, a smile of interest appeared on the faces of the spectators.

"Why did you bring them here?" asked Smart Archie, who had not turned away his face since the stranger had first spoken.

"I was hinformed that there were more wigs here than in any other parts of the colonies."

"I reckon you mean Whigs," suggested the auctioneer demurely.

"Hi hassuredly do, sir. That was what I said—'wigs.'"

Smart Archie turned sharply as a laugh was heard from some in the audience, and the sound of mirth instantly was repressed.

"Who told you to come here?" he inquired of the Englishman.

"Hi cannot recollect, sir. Hi fancy quite a large number of people reported to me that there were more 'wigs' 'ere than Hi could

find hanywhere helse. Naturally Hi concluded that hif wigs were quite plentiful 'ere then there must be a chance to sell more." In bearing and speech the stranger apparently was sincere, but he still was keenly watched, although he did not betray any fear or even suspicion of his hearers.

"I 'm afraid you 've made a mistake," suggested Smart Archie. "Some one has told you there were a great many Whigs here, and you mistook the word for another. There 's a heap of difference between Whigs and wigs."

"Hi 'ave some of the best wigs," — began the Englishman, opening the bag as he spoke, and drawing out a powdered wig to which a long and carefully worked queue was attached. "Hif you don't mind, sir, Hi should be pleased to 'ave you display this wig to the people. Hit would not be hin the least hextraordinary hif some would like to purchase."

"The man is as slow-witted as a mule," said Noah in a low voice to George.

"He d-does n't know t-the d-difference between a w-w-w-w — " began George.

"He does n't for a fact," broke in Noah. "There! What 's Smart Archie going to do?"

The auctioneer now mounted the platform, and faced his audience. "Gentlemen," he be-

gan, "we are this day assembled under one of the most auspicious occasions of our lives. The freedom of these great and glorious colonies is almost accomplished. Recognizing this fact, we have with us this evenin' one of the shrewdest hobservers of the signs of the times which Hold England has hever produced." Ignoring the laugh which greeted his mimicry of the man who had ventured into the region to dispose of his wares, he continued, "We are told that sweets are for the sweet. Our venturesome visitor from the far distant Isles of Great Britain believes also that wigs are for the Whigs. The bald-headed now will find relief from flies and baldness. These wigs" — and Smart Archie held one of the wigs up to view as he spoke — "are artistic, free from the habitations of devouring pests, and well worth two guineas of any man's coin. But, my friends, do you know what I am willing to do this day? Appreciating the boldness, not to mention the baldness of this henterprising Englishman, Hi ham prepared to knock down these works of hart at a price that will make the British lion roar with the pain thereof. Step up here on this platform," the auctioneer abruptly demanded of one of the negroes. "Now then, Jacob," continued

Smart Archie, as the grinning negro obeyed and climbed upon the platform, "bow down thine head." As the black man did as he was bidden, the auctioneer deftly adjusted the huge powdered wig to his woolly head and then carefully smoothed the queue. Not heeding the shouts of laughter which greeted the negro's appearance, the auctioneer continued, "Now then, gentlemen, how much am I offered for Jacob? He is thirty years of age, sound in limb and mind, of a good disposition, a good worker and a trusty man. How much? Did you say two hundred dollars? Ah, no, that cannot be! The wig alone is worth a guinea, and that is included in the bid. How much? Two twenty-five? I would thank you if the offer was not so funny. Think of it, gentlemen! Why your first and only hopportunity to obtain a true descendant of Ham, and the wig — priceless for Whigs — is almost a gift. Wait a moment, gentlemen," pleaded Smart Archie, as he paused in his harangue. Seeing the four other negroes who were to be disposed of at the sale, he placed a huge powdered wig on each woolly head and then stepped back as if to admire the artistic effect of his labors. The faces of the slaves were all smiling while shouts of applause arose

from the men in the assembly. The Englishman, however, was unmoved, and gazed calmly first at the laughing spectators and then at the strangely bedecked blacks.

The bidding was now resumed, and in the midst of the bantering of the solemn-faced auctioneer and the jests and laughter of the crowd the slaves were soon sold.

The final sale had just been completed, when the attention of all was drawn to a tall, raw-boned, awkward young fellow who at that time joined the group and approached the platform upon which Smart Archie was standing.

"What yo' all doin'?" demanded the young backwoodsman.

"Getting rich," replied Smart Archie solemnly.

"Yo' don't look th' part," retorted the stranger, apparently not heeding the shouts of laughter that greeted his assertion.

"Do you want to make two or three hundred dollars?" inquired the auctioneer sharply.

"I reckon," assented the stranger readily.

"Then step right up here where I am."

The stranger instantly grasped the sides of the platform and leaped lightly to a place beside the auctioneer. Tall and raw-boned, he

towered above the head of Smart Archie. Unabashed and apparently unaware of what the invitation which he had so promptly accepted implied, he stood looking calmly down at the man who had bidden him come. "Fetch on yo'r money," he said in a tone of triumph.

"Wait a bit," responded Smart Archie. "It will come all right, sir, only you all must not interrupt me. You agree to that?"

"Yaas, sur."

"Very well. You 'll have your money soon. Now then, gentlemen," continued the auctioneer, as he turned once more to the bidders, "here is an able-bodied substitute. Gentlemen, he will serve three months for the man who will pay him best. You all see that he is sound, sober, honest, and *no runaway*. Who bids three hundred? Two hundred? Who will start at one-fifty? Why, gentlemen, it requires no effort on the part of any one to see that he is as full of courage as an egg is of meat. He 's got blood and muscle. If I hear three hundred bidden right now, I 'll not wait fo. any one to raise it. I 'll knock him down without another word."

"Yo' will, will yo'?" demanded the backwoodsman sharply, as he turned upon the auctioneer. "I reck'n it 'll take more 'n you

c'n put up t' knock me down! If yo' all don't reck'n so, come on an' try it!" The lank "substitute" advanced upon Smart Archie, his fists drawn back; and, to the joy of all the beholders, the man plainly intended to take the auctioneer at his word. Shrieks of delight and approval from the spectators only served to increase his apparent determination to defend himself.

"Put down your fists. I'm not going to hurt you," said Smart Archie.

For a moment the man stared dubiously at the auctioneer, and then, as he slowly lowered his arms, he said suspiciously, "I reck'n yo' all better look out." A loud renewal of the applause of the assembly seemed to increase his courage.

Ignoring the warning, Smart Archie calmly resumed his appeal for bids. "See what a brave fellow it is!" he said in a loud voice. "Why, gentlemen, he is as ready to fight as a rattler. He is worth fifty dollars extra to any man. Think what a substitute he will make for any one, who for various reasons may not be able just now to heed his country's call. Who will give three hundred dollars for this fine fellow? Did I understand you aright, Mr. Heatley? Was that your bid? Very well,

I'm a man of my word. I said I'd knock him down to the first man that could offer three hundred. It 's your bid, Mr. Heatley, and the man is yours. I congratulate you, sir," the auctioneer added, as he turned to the substitute and extended his hand.

"Yo' 're welcome, I reck'n, though it 's a wee bit more 'n I can take in," replied the young backwoodsman, as he seized the outstretched hand, and exerting all his strength, apparently tried to crush it in his grasp.

Smart Archie did not wince, but his hand closed in a vice-like grip upon the hand of the substitute. For at least two minutes the men did not move, as each did his utmost quietly to squeeze the harder. The contest quickly was understood by the beholders, and their shouts of interest were prolonged and loud.

At last the stranger twisted his hand free, and as he did so, he exclaimed, "I reck'n yo' all are a good mon. I dinna ken yo' had such a paw."

"Have you had all you want?" inquired Smart Archie quietly.

"I wouldna mind th' siller."

"The three hundred dollars? Is that what you mean?"

"I do that."

"Well, sir, all you 'll have to do will be to take Mr. Heatley's place among the Liberty men. You won't mind a little thing like that."

"An' will I have t' fight th' redcoats?"

"If they don't run when they see you."

"An' th' Tories an' th' Indians?"

"Yes, sir, if they 'll stand still long enough to let you get hold of them."

"Na, na, mon! I reck'n I canna do thot."

"Then you won't get your three hundred."

"Was it that ye sold me for — t' fight th' redcoats?"

"Just to be Mr. Heatley's substitute, you know. Think of the money you 'll have."

"Hoot, mon. I 'm tellin' ye I canna."

"Well, perhaps we 'll let you off if you 'll agree to treat the crowd. How will that do, gentlemen?" inquired Smart Archie, turning to the assembly. The shouts of laughter and approval that greeted the query did not appear in the least to disconcert the "substitute."

"I canna," he said soberly, in his strange dialect which was a mingling of the Scotch burr with that of the Southern. "It would tak' more siller than I have. Besides, I didna come for that, mon."

"To what do we owe the pleasure of your society this evenin'?"

"I come t' warn ye," said the young backwoodsman.

"Of what?"

"Th' Bloody Scout has heard ye were assemblin' here, an' they are comin' for ye."

"When?" Smart Archie spoke sharply now, and his unconcealed interest was shared by all who were present. Every man was silent and anxiously awaiting the reply of the stranger.

"I canna just tell ye, but I reck'n it is aboot sundown."

CHAPTER III

WITH THE "BLOODY SCOUT"

THE men of the assembly were all standing about the stranger now and peering into his face with an eagerness that betrayed their alarm.

"What is the 'Bloody Scout?'" inquired Noah in a low voice of George.

"I-it 's a b-band of T-t-tory villains. T-they r-rob a-and s-shoot a-and hang t-the Liberty m-m-men — I-I c-can't t-t-t-talk!" said George, as, disregarding his companion, he pushed his way among the men until he was close to the young stranger who had brought the startling news. Noah too was soon in the front line, and both boys were listening excitedly to what was said.

"What is your name?" Smart Archie was saying.

"Duncan," replied the stranger.

"Duncan what?"

"Duncan Duncan."

"Where do you live?"

"Back among the hills."

"The people there are all Tories."

"Indeed, they are the noo."

"Is your father a Tory?"

"I wouldna say that. He and my brithers side with the King."

"And you don't?"

"I wouldna jest say I was against heem."

"What do you mean, anyway? You say the 'Scout' will be here by sundown and that is n't more than two hours away. We know the most of the hill men are Tories, and you yourself don't claim to be a Liberty man."

"Weel, it 's this way, mon. I heard the talk in my father's house this morn, and I couldna rest easy, I reckon, when I thought of all that I had heard about the sufferings of the Whigs, so I decided to come and tell them what was about to befa'."

"Your father and brothers don't know you came?"

"They dinna ken."

"That 's strange," said Smart Archie thoughtfully. He was looking at the young stranger, whose air of unconcern certainly was puzzling, and yet it was evident that he was somehow impressed by his bearing as well as by what he had heard. "Where is the Scout now?" he demanded abruptly.

"They are hiding on Mill Run."

"How many are there?"

"I canna just say."

"Are there ten?"

"More than ten."

"Are there twelve?"

"Nay, mon, not so many as thot?"

"Can you lead us to the place where they are camped?"

"I can, but I weellna."

"Why not? Here! Stop that man! Get him! Don't let him get away!" called Smart Archie abruptly, as he turned and pointed to the Englishman whose wigs had been offered for sale. The stranger had followed the Liberty men when they had gathered about the young Scotchman, but now apparently he was trying to slip quietly out of the crowd. As he heard the sharp call of Smart Archie, the man instantly began to run and started swiftly toward the rough road.

"Stop him! Get him! Don't let him get away!" shouted Smart Archie once more.

Before his final appeal had been heard, Noah had started swiftly in pursuit of the fleeing man. Several others also had heeded the call, but in a few minutes it became manifest that the race had been left to Noah who

alone was now following the Englishman. A bend in the road soon concealed them from the sight of the assembly.

Noah Dare did not glance behind him, and unaware that he was the sole pursuer, sped on in his chase. He was unaware of the reason for Smart Archie's sharp call, but the speed which the fugitive now was displaying was sufficient of itself to indicate that something was wrong. Doggedly he held to the chase, surprised at the swiftness of the man he was following as well as by his unusual powers of endurance. He was aware that the man might be armed, for he had not been searched when he had brought his strange wares to the auction. Watchful of his every movement, Noah resolutely sped forward; but, exert himself as he might, he was unable to decrease the distance between himself and the fleeing man. Noah's powers of endurance were not less than his skill in wrestling. Indeed, he had prided himself upon his fleetness. He was not only the acknowledged champion wrestler among Mad Anthony's men, but he was also as swift a runner as the troops had boasted.

And yet he thought half angrily, here was an Englishman who was apparently as fleet-footed as he. The man was running easily

and was not showing any signs of distress. Indeed, he occasionally looked back to see if his pursuer was still within sight. Not a word had he spoken as yet, nor had he betrayed any alarm.

As the chase continued, Noah's determination to overtake the man increased. He was not easily turned aside from a project once formed, and in the race in which he now found himself engaged not only his own pride, but an increasing conviction that the man whom he was following was something more than the innocent vender of wigs which he had pretended to be, strengthened him in his purpose.

On and still on fled the pursuer and pursued. Suddenly the man turned aside from the road over which both had been running and darted into the near-by woods. He was following the course of a brook or "run," and as Noah speedily followed, he was mindful chiefly of his determination to keep the Englishman in sight. Over the fallen logs he leaped in his eagerness, darting among the huge trees that were growing near the stream; almost breathless now from his exertions, he still followed the fleeing man for whom his respect was steadily increasing. For a half-

mile or more the chase continued, Noah only occasionally losing sight of the man before him and each time speedily catching sight of him again, as he sped on along the bank. Not once had it occurred to the young soldier that the Englishman was following a plan, nor had he thought of the refuge the runner might be seeking to gain. His sole purpose now was to overtake the vender of wigs by holding to the pursuit until the man should be compelled to abandon his flight from sheer exhaustion.

Suddenly Noah heard a shout before him, and without a thought that the call or cry had been uttered by any one except the man he was following, he tried to increase his speed, somehow feeling convinced that the end of the chase was near at hand. He was still running swiftly and peering before him with renewed interest, when suddenly his foot was caught by a vine and he was thrown forward prostrate upon his face.

Before he could rise, a half-dozen men flung themselves upon him, and he was helpless in their powerful grasp. He was roughly lifted to a standing position, and found himself surrounded by a dozen men, who were looking at him with no friendly glances. The men all

were clad in the rough garments of the hill people, but, as he noticed a tiny strip of red cloth sewed to the hat of every one, he instantly was aware that his captors were Tories. There flashed into his mind the words of the young backwoodsman that a band of the Bloody Scout was near, and instantly he concluded that in his mad pursuit of the fleeing Englishman he had foolishly permitted himself to be led into the very place where Duncan Duncan had said the band was hiding. Striving not to betray his alarm or suspicion by the expression of his face, he looked quietly at the men surrounding him, waiting for them to speak.

"Who is this mon?" asked one of the band of the Englishman who now approached.

"He is one of the Liberty men," replied the man whom Noah had followed.

"Did ye fin' out how many were there?"

"Twenty or thirty."

"So many? And ye say this mon is one?"

"You can see for yourself."

"Did ye sill your wigs?"

"I have n't had my pay yet," replied the Englishman dryly. "They served me a good turn though, for the rebels never suspected me."

"Hoot, mon, ye canna be sae sure o' thot. What is to be done wi' this mon?" he added, as he looked again at Noah. The young soldier was aware, as he heard the question asked by the leader in a tone so deep and solemn that the seriousness of the purpose of the Tory band was at once evident, that the men before him would not hesitate to dispose of him in any way they deemed wise. His alarm increased, as he heard the Englishman suggest that there "was not time for any delay."

"We 're due at sundown and that is not more than half an hour away," he added.

"'T is well said."

"I saw Duncan at the sale," suggested the man abruptly.

"My Duncan?" inquired the leader of the band. As he spoke, a dark scowl spread over his face, and several of the younger men in the little assembly stepped forward and looked earnestly at the speaker. As Noah glanced at them, he instantly recognized a strong resemblance in their features to those of the young man who had told Smart Archie of the presence and purpose of the "Scout."

"Your Duncan," replied the Englishman.

"'T is th' first traitor that ever bore th'

name o' Duncan," said the leader solemnly. "His blow be upon his own head. Do ye think, mon, he told th' rebels o' our plan?"

"He did not know the plan unless you told him."

"I didna tell heem."

"Did any one tell him?" inquired the Englishman, as he looked from one man to another in the group. A solemn shake of the head was the reply of every one.

"I canna understand how Duncan could know," continued the leader thoughtfully.

"What was he doing there?"

"I canna say."

"Perhaps this fellow can tell us," suggested the Englishman, pointing to Noah as he spoke. "He was there all the time and might have heard what I did not. I did not venture too close to the men after they had used my wigs in selling the negroes."

"Did ye hear Duncan say anything?" inquired the leader, addressing Noah.

"I heard him say when he was urged to go with the men that he would not fight the redcoats or Tories or Indians."

"Did he say that, mon?"

"Those are almost his own words." Noah did not refer to the other words, of a different

character, which the young Scotchman had spoken.

"Then maybe he is still a Duncan," said the leader solemnly. Turning once more to his companions, he again inquired, "What shall we do w' this mon?"

"Tie him to a tree and leave him till we come back," suggested one of the band. "'T is time we were on our way to the rebel camp."

The suggestion at once was acted upon, and Noah was seized by four of the men and hastily tied to the trunk of a tree. His hands and feet were secured by strong thongs, and he was left standing in a position that was torturing. He had decided instantly that resistance was worse than useless, and while he yielded without any protest, he was keenly observing the men in the band.

Their task accomplished, the men then assembled at a place a few yards from the prisoner, and a consultation followed that lasted only two or three minutes. At its conclusion one man seated himself near the tree to which Noah was bound, while the others all looked to the priming of their guns and then stood in silence awaiting the word of their leader. Despite the pain he was suffering from his

bands, Noah, as he watched the men, concluded that they were about to start for the camp of the Liberty men. The sun had almost disappeared.

The leader turned to his followers for a final word when suddenly there was a loud call from some one in the near-by forest. "Surrender! Lay down your arms, you bloody Tories! You 're surrounded!"

The startled Tories turned for a moment and looked in the direction from which the unexpected demand had come. The forms of men were seen darting among the trees, and apparently every one was armed. Before a shot was fired, the men had obtained hiding-places. They themselves now were unseen, but the Tory band was in plain sight.

"Who are ye?" called the leader, as he stood a moment, looking into the forest.

"We 're the Liberty men you came to get. We thought we 'd save you the trouble of going on, so we came out to meet you." Noah recognized the voice of Smart Archie, and he was also convinced that his followers had surrounded the place, for he was positive that he had seen men moving among the trees on all sides. A momentary fear that he himself might be a target, if shots were fired, swept

over him. None of his friends was aware of his presence, and he was helpless either to escape or to try to defend himself.

"Will ye parley?" called the Tory leader.

"No! Lay down your arms!"

"Come an' get them, then."

Smart Archie approached, and advancing beside him was Duncan. The sight of the latter seemed to make the leader beside himself. "Ye are no chiel o' mine! Ye are o' your father, th' devil!" he shouted, as seizing his gun he struck the young backwoodsman to the ground.

Instantly the reports of guns rang out. The Tory band broke and fled. Three dropped motionless to the ground, but shots and shouts followed the others as they darted into the forest, leaving Noah fast bound and alone.

CHAPTER IV

AN UNCERTAIN RECRUIT

For a time Noah was left alone in the gathering darkness. He heard the reports of the guns and the loud shouts of the men who were trampling over the brush and running through the woods. Even Duncan, despite the blow he had received from his father, had disappeared, and soon even the sounds of the fleeing or attacking men were no longer heard.

Cramped and suffering from the thongs with which he was fast bound to the tree, Noah struggled to release himself, but his efforts were vain. The straps cut more deeply into his flesh or the very knots were drawn more tightly with his efforts. Desisting when he discovered the effects of his efforts, Noah strove to wait patiently for some one to come to his aid.

An owl came and perched in a near-by tree, and hooted as if he were mocking the troubled young soldier. Clouds crept across the face of the sky and the gloom of the woods

became more oppressive. The very silence that rested over the region, broken only by the weird and solemn cry of the owl, increased the feeling of loneliness in Noah's heart.

Had his recent companions abandoned him? Had they met with misfortune in their attempt to take or scatter the members of the Bloody Scout? The questions were not soothing, and their suggestiveness added to Noah's alarm as the time slowly passed. Was he to be compelled to remain where he was? Was no one to come to his aid? The thought of a possible return of the Tory band alarmed him still more. He tugged and pulled again at his bonds, unmindful of the pain which his exertions aroused. His strength, great as it was, however, was not equal to the demands made upon it, and, utterly wearied, at last he again gave up the attempt to secure his release.

For a moment he was tempted to shout. His friends might hear his calls for help, but as he quickly thought that his enemies also might be the ones to answer, he remained silent. Continually he was looking into the woods about him, and all the while was listening for the sounds of approaching footsteps. In his desperation it seemed to him that hours must have passed since Smart Archie had come

with his men. The clouds now had passed away, and the face of the sky was revealed. In the increased light the dim shadows of the branches of the tall trees assumed fantastic shapes, as if they were the reflections of the bodies of men that had come to mock him in his helplessness.

What was that? Noah, startled by what seemed to be the sound of a snapping branch, leaned forward and looked eagerly in the direction from which the sound had come. The noise was repeated, and was followed by a silence that was unbroken for several minutes. Startled, uncertain whether it was friend or foe that was near, Noah did not call. Watching for the man, if it was a man, he gazed steadily in the direction from which the sound had come, but was not able to discern the form of any one.

Mystified and beginning to be fearful that some one had been looking for him and had failed to find his hiding-place, he was tempted to announce his presence by a low call. Before he could speak, however, he heard the voice of some one not far behind him and instantly recognized it as that of George.

"W-where a-a-are y-you?" came the inquiry.

"Here I am, George," replied Noah eagerly.

"Where i-i-is t-that?"

"Right here."

"N-no, I 'm r-r-right 'here.' Y-you m-must b-b-be t-there."

"Follow my voice. You 'll find me."

George was approaching, but manifestly was not altogether certain of his way.

"K-keep c-c-calling," he said.

"All right, George. Hear me now? No? you 're too far to the left. This way. That 's right. Now you see me! I 'd rather see you, George, than anybody I know just at this moment."

The presence of the prisoner had been discovered now, and George speedily crossed the open space and approached the tree to which Noah was bound. One or two swift cuts freed Noah, and with an expression of relief the young soldier stepped forward.

"That was a good turn, George. I was beginning to fear I 'd have to stay here all night. Where are the men? What has become of the Scout? Did you get any of them?"

"G-got t-two."

"Any one shot?"

"Y-y-es. I d-don't know h-h-how m-many."

"Where is Smart Archie?"

"G-gone back t-to c-camp."

"Why did n't he come here for me?"

"I c-came, d-d-did n't I?"

"Yes. You 're a fine chap, George. Where is Duncan?"

"He 's g-gone w-with S-s-s—"

"Smart Archie?"

"T-that 's w-w-what I s-s-said, d-d-did n't I?"

"That 's what you started to say. Where is his father?"

"I d-don't know. I w-w-wish I d-did a-and so d-does Smart Archie."

"Got away, did he?"

"W-what d-d-d' ye think h-he d-did?"

"I did n't know. That was why I asked. Did you find the man that came with the wigs to sell this afternoon?"

"N-no."

"He is the worst one in the lot. He is n't just an innocent Englishman, as he tried to make us believe. He was one of the Bloody Scout and came to the auction just to find out how many liberty men were there."

"How d-d' ye k-k-know t-that?"

"I heard him say so. The men talked about it."

"How did t-they g-get you? I t-thought

y-you w-were t-the b-best wrestler in M-mad Anthony's l-l-l—"

"I did n't say I was. But I tripped over a root while I was running after the Englishman, and before I could get up, four of the rascals jumped on me."

"H-h-hurt y-ye a-any?"

"Not much. I 'm sore from the straps. Was Donald hurt much when his father struck him with the butt of his gun?"

"I d-d-don't know. He makes a b-b-big fuss a-and g-groans—"

"But he went with you?"

"Y-yes."

"I wonder if he 'll go back now?"

"Back t-to his f-father? He s-says h-he is g-going t-to s-stay w-with t-the l-liberty m-men now."

"I don't blame him. His brothers were almost as bad as his father in their abuse, and the Englishman was the worst of all. He said that Donald told the liberty men just where the Bloody Scout were hiding."

"H-he d-did. Smart Archie d-d-did n't b-believe h-him at f-first, b-but he d-decided t-to try—"

"Well, he found out."

"Y-yes, h-he f-found o-out, a-and s-so d-did you."

"You know the way back, don't you?" inquired Noah, as he glanced uneasily about him. The two boys had left the woods and now were in the rough roadway over which Noah had gone in his pursuit of the fleeing Englishman, although in the dim light the young soldier failed to recognize the region.

"Y-yes. I c-could n't l-lose my way i-if I was b-b-blindfolded. B-but d-don't a-ask me t-to t-tell y-you —"

"I won't," laughed Noah, his confidence restored as the two boys now drew near the place they were seeking. There they found Smart Archie and his men assembled, and the approach of the boys did not arouse more than a passing remark, as they joined the group. Duncan was standing near two men who plainly were prisoners, and Noah at once concluded that these must be the men to whom George had referred when he had explained that the liberty men had taken some of the Scout.

"What are your men trying to do?" Smart Archie was saying to the two prisoners when George and Noah approached.

"We 'd have trapped you," replied one of

the men angrily. "If it had n't been for this traitor son o' Duncan, we 'd had you all." As he spoke, the man glared at the young Scotchman in a manner that left no doubt as to his feelings in the matter.

"Ye didna. Ye canna noo," said Duncan calmly.

"There 'll be anither day coomin', mon," spoke up the second prisoner.

"I dinna ken aboot thot," retorted Duncan, unmoved by the implied threat.

"What were you planning to do — if you had taken us?" asked Smart Archie.

"I canna tell ye."

"I ken weel," suggested Duncan. "I reckon ye wad 'a' been free t' steal th' horses and mistreat th' poor o' th' —"

"Never mind that," broke in Smart Archie sharply. "We 'll have a patrol after this, and every one of us shall take his turn. We 'll not be caught napping again."

Selecting four of the men who should first serve, he was about to turn away when Noah approached him and said in a low voice, "Find out what you can about the Englishman who came to sell the wigs this afternoon. He 's a good deal more than he appears to be."

Smart Archie at once acted upon the sug-

gestion, but neither of the two prisoners imparted any information, if indeed either was aware of the meaning of the man's presence among the Scout. All that was said was that he was a stranger who had joined the band only that morning. Nor was Duncan able to add anything to what the prisoners had said. In spite of the manifest feeling of Smart Archie to treat the matter as of slight importance, Noah was convinced that the stranger was a dangerous man, and that more would be heard of him. Nor was it long before the young soldier's fears were startlingly confirmed.

A marked change speedily came over the camp. Smart Archie rigidly enforced the patrol, and many of the men served regularly on this duty. When three days elapsed, Noah's impatience at the enforced delay became so marked that he sought Smart Archie and informed him that he should wait no longer than the following day. If the men were not prepared to go on into Virginia then, he should proceed by himself.

"Every man counts for two in a time like this," replied the leader. "I have word of the coming of six more within a day or two. You will save time to wait for us. The Tories and

the Bloody Scout are busier than they have been since the war began. If you try to go alone, you may run your neck into a halter."

"I must take my chances then," said Noah quietly.

"Tell me, do you see much of this Duncan?"

"Not very much."

"What do you make of him?"

"He is a puzzle."

"Do you think he can be relied upon?"

"He is very angry with his father, his brothers, and his neighbors."

"He may get over that. Then he may make trouble for us. He shows up all right morning and evening, but never appears when his turn to serve on the patrol comes. I think I know what he does then."

"What?"

"He crawls into the church and sleeps in the pulpit." Smart Archie referred to a rude little church that stood near the camp. "I've a notion to break him of the trick. It may be that it will help to make a man of him, and we sure do need every man we can get."

"How do you plan to cure him?" Noah smiled as he looked into the twinkling eyes of the young leader, somehow convinced that

he was not plotting any serious damage to the peculiar recruit.

"I am inclined to think he 'll turn out all right," said Smart Archie thoughtfully. "I don't blame him for feeling as he does. Those Scotchmen in the mountains came over here to get away from oppression, and yet now that they are here they are standing right by King George. Just now Duncan thinks he is for us. Perhaps he is, but he has a very peculiar way of showing his zeal. He shirks his duty as patrol every time."

"You said you thought you could cure him," suggested Noah.

"So I did — and you must help me — you and George Baker."

"What can we do?"

"Listen and I'll tell you," said Smart Archie, smiling and glancing about him to make certain that his words were not overheard.

The interview lasted five minutes, and when Noah departed, he went at once in search of George. When the latter was found and the proposed plan was explained to him, he entered heartily into the scheme.

"It's j-just l-like Smart Archie," he laughed. "T-that's w-why h-he i-i-is such a g-good man

t-to l-lead us. I r-reckon D-d-duncan will b-be cured —"

What the plan was became partly evident, when, after dusk, Noah and George, carrying a strange burden, stole unobserved into the little church. A few minutes later they reappeared, but both lingered near, awaiting the result of the instructions they had received from the leader.

CHAPTER V

THE ATTACK IN THE DARKNESS

THE camp soon became quiet, and the only persons to be seen moving were the patrol. The silent and regular advance and return of the men who were on guard at last became monotonous to the watching and waiting boys who were seated on the ground, leaning back against the rear wall of the little church. Smart Archie had not been seen since their vigil began, but both were confident that he was not far away and would appear when the proper time should come.

"I r-reckon w-we have h-had our t-trouble f-for our p-p-pains," stammered George in a low voice, as he leaned toward his companion.

"Keep quiet. You waste too much time," whispered Noah good-naturedly.

"T-that 's w-what I 'd l-like t-to d-do. We 've got m-more t-time than anything e-else j-just n-now."

"Keep a sharp lookout on that side while I watch this — Hello!" Noah sharply inter-

rupted himself. "I thought I heard a noise in the church."

Both boys were silent for a brief time, but if Noah had heard any unusual sound, it was not repeated.

"How l-long a-are w-w-we to s-stay h-here, Noah?" whispered George.

"Long enough."

"W-why d-does n't he c-c-come, if h-he is c-c-coming at all?"

"Keep still!"

"I a-am s-s-still."

"Keep stiller, then."

"W-what f-for?"

"So that Duncan won't be frightened away."

"Y-you d-don't know t-that h-he w-w-will c-come —"

George stopped abruptly as at that moment a loud and prolonged yell came from the interior of the little building. Instantly George and Noah ran to the front of the church, but quick as they were, they found Smart Archie there before them. He was fumbling at the door, but in the dim light he was not able at first to open it.

"George, go get a torch! Be quick about it!" commanded Smart Archie. "Light it

and bring it back here right away! Don't try to say anything!" he added, as George began to stammer. "Save your wind for the race."

The young recruit turned away to do as he had been bidden, but even he stopped a moment, as a series of shrieks and shouts came from the interior of the building. "Help me! Mon, coome an' save me! The de'il has me on th' floor. I ken he 's th' de'il! I ken hees cloven hoof! Help! Help! Help!" The appeal ended in a prolonged wail that emphasized the terror of the man in the darkness.

"That 's Duncan," said Smart Archie quietly. "No mistaking that voice."

"Why does n't he come out? If he 's as scared as he sounds, what in the world makes him stay?" asked Noah.

"He says the de'il has his cloven foot on him."

Noah laughed, but before he could reply, the prolonged appeal again came from within the building. "I can't get away! Why dinna ye coome to my help? I tell ye th' de'il has me! I canna move! He is whippin' me wi' hees tail! Help! Help!" Once more the pitiful appeal for aid ended in a prolonged squeal of terror. Its effect upon the two young soldiers, however, was only to make one of them

laugh and the other to say briefly, "Duncan will be a better soldier soon."

At this moment the door gave way before the efforts of Smart Archie, and as it swung back before them, the two boys rushed into the church. The interior, however, was so dark that they were unable to see more than the indistinct outlines of the rude little pulpit and the small windows through which the dim light entered.

"Where are you, Duncan?" called Smart Archie sharply.

"Here, mon! Th' de'il has me on th' floor."

"In the pulpit?"

"Nay, mon!"

"Where are you, then?"

"Where I 'm tellin' ye. On th' floor."

As Duncan spoke, there came a loud prolonged bleat from something or some one in the room. The very walls seemed to shake, and the loose windows to rattle in their frames. "Bl-l-l-a-a-at!" again the unearthly noise was heard, followed quickly by another frantic appeal from Duncan.

"Noo, ye ken where I am!" he called. "I can feel th' de'il's hot breath right in me face! Quick, mon, or he 'll no leave me here longer! Gie me yer han'!"

"We can't see you," retorted Smart Archie, at the same time cautioning Noah to restrain his laugh, for the usually quiet young soldier was almost on the point of shouting in his delight.

"I 'm right here, I tell ye, mon!" shouted Duncan.

"Where is that?"

"On th' floor! Be quick, mon! Ye'll ne'er see me more if ye no coome t' me help the noo!"

"Here comes George with his torch!" whispered Noah to his companion.

As George at that moment entered the building and the light of his torch first was seen, a fresh yell from the prostrate Duncan greeted the ears of the trio. "'T is th' flame o' th' pit!" roared Duncan. "Ye 'll be too late, mon, if ye no help me the noo. Ye 'll lose a good soldier, I 'm tellin' ye! Why do ye no' gie me yer hand? Help me, mon, help me!"

"Be quiet a moment so that we can find you!" answered Smart Archie, taking the torch from George's hand and leading the way to the spot from which the cries had arisen.

Holding the blazing torch aloft, the young soldiers looked down upon a sight that made all three laugh loudly. Prostrate upon the

floor with outstretched arms lay the latest recruit. Standing directly over him was a calf, two or three months old, blinking as it looked into the light of the torch.

"Get up," said Smart Archie sternly.

"I canna," replied Duncan disconsolately.

"I'll help you!" laughed Noah, as he reached down and grasped the terrified Duncan by the arm. In a moment Duncan was lifted, and the frightened calf with a prolonged, agonizing bleat of terror leaped into the aisle and ran swiftly toward the open door. For an instant Duncan gazed in perplexity at the departing animal, and then in apparent unconcern turned to his rescuers and said simply, "I reckoned he was th' de'il."

"Where did you find him?"

"He was in th' poolpit, mon, I—"

"What were *you* doing in the pulpit?" interrupted Smart Archie sternly.

For the first time Duncan was slightly abashed. "I was for a bit o' a snooze," he explained.

"'Snooze!' Why, man, don't you know that you were due for a patrol?"

"I was that sleepy it wad do no gude for me t' tak' a gun—"

"Duncan, do you want me to send you to

the Bloody Scout?" abruptly inquired Smart Archie.

"Nay, mon. Why should ye sind me?"

"To have you where you belong."

"Nay, nay, mon! Did I no tell ye I was for th' liberty men?"

"Then why did you shirk?"

"I willna do thot again."

"You are sure, are you?"

"Aye, mon, if ye 'll no tell th' ither men."

At last a joint in Duncan's armor had been found, and, quick to see his advantage, Smart Archie said, "I 'll have to think about that. When a man can't tell the difference between a three-months-old calf and the devil —"

"Hoot, mon!" broke in Duncan eagerly. "It was a bit dark, ye ken. Whin I felt th' cloven hoof —"

"Have you ever seen the 'de'il' before, Duncan?" broke in the leader.

"Nay, mon. I reck'n I 've heerd o' him, but I canna say that I had seen heem wi' me own eyes."

"Do you want to see him, hear him, feel him —"

"I couldna say thot exac'ly."

"Well, you will if you ever try to dodge a duty again."

"How?"

"Whenever you hear a bleat like a calf, you must remember what happened in this church to-night. Can you do that?"

"I dinna ken."

"All right, Duncan. If you are n't sure, then I 'll get some of the men to help you."

"Ye willna tell o' me mistake this night?" said Duncan hastily.

"Do you reckon you 'll be able to remember if I don't?"

"I think I can promise ye."

"Then we 'll just hold this story of your meeting the 'de'il' to-night. If you ever seem likely to forget —"

"I 'll no forget," asserted the young Scotchman hastily.

"Then we 'll all go," said Smart Archie. "Duncan, are you ready to do your duty now on patrol?"

"I reckon th' morrow wad be better."

"Bla-a-a-a!" shouted Smart Archie.

"Sure, I 'll do me duty!" said Duncan promptly. "I hadna any ither thought in min'! Shall I go th' noo?"

"Come with me," said Smart Archie quietly.

As the leader was promptly followed by Duncan, the two boys turned and departed

from the little church to seek their own quarters.

As he was about to enter the little house to which, as we already know, Noah Dare had been assigned, he was surprised when he beheld in front of it an armed guard.

"What is wrong?" inquired Noah hastily.

"We have placed one of the Bloody Scout in here for safety," the guard explained. "It is the safest place in or near the camp."

"Where is the man?"

"We tied his feet and left him in the loft."

"That is where I sleep," said Noah quickly. "I'll find some other place."

"No. The fellow will be all the safer if you are in the room with him. There is n't much danger of his getting away, but if you are in the room with him he won't even try."

"All right, then," responded Noah. "I'll go up and turn in."

When Noah entered the low attic, at first he was unable to see any one in the room, but after a few minutes, by the aid of the light that came from the one window, which was without any covering, he discovered a man lying upon the floor. There was a high bed in the room, and this the young soldier had used since he had been assigned to the house.

Divesting himself of his coat, he prepared to climb into the bed, but stopped abruptly as the other man in the room spoke for the first time.

"Come here," said the man, in a low voice.

"What do you want?" inquired Noah, as he approached and looked down into the man's face. "You are the man that came here with the wigs to sell!" he exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes."

"Did n't you know the difference between wigs and Whigs?"

"What do you think?"

"You are an Englishman and so did n't know about the 'h'," suggested the young soldier good-naturedly. "I 'm sorry for you, but —"

"But what, Noah Dare?" interrupted the man quietly.

"Who are you? How do you know my name?" demanded Noah, approaching more closely and looking down into the man's face.

"Do you know who I am?"

"I never saw you before."

"Think again. Did you never see me in Greenwich?"

"No. When did I see you in my home?"

"You remember the tea burning, don't you?"

"I have good reason to remember it. What do you know about that? You are an Englishman. You could n't have been there."

"I was born in Jersey. Does that make one an Englishman?"

"No, it does n't. Who are you? What are you doing here?"

"Sit down beside me. I 've something to tell you, Noah Dare."

Mystified, and still somewhat suspicious, Noah declined the invitation. Apparently ignoring the attitude of the young soldier, the man in a low voice began to talk. As he continued, Noah's excitement increased. A half-hour later the man, freed from his bonds, was lowered from the attic window by a blanket which the young soldier himself was holding, but the escaping man had scarcely dropped to the ground when there was a loud shout from the guard and the report of his musket broke in upon the silence of the summer night.

CHAPTER VI

AN UNSATISFACTORY EXPLANATION

Hastily withdrawing from his exposed position, Noah still could see the man whom he had let down from the window, as he darted into the road, swiftly followed by the guard. The latter was shouting as he ran, calling upon his comrades for aid. In a brief time his summons was answered and several joined in the pursuit, two of the soldiers being mounted.

In the dim light it was impossible for Noah to see what the result of the chase was, for in a brief time the darkness hid all the men from his sight. Convinced that he would soon be called upon to make some explanation of his strange action, Noah at first decided to await the coming of Smart Archie in the house where he then was. His first fear that the escaping prisoner might have been hit by the bullet of the guard was gone now, for the man had sped on in his flight in a manner that plainly showed that he was unharmed. His own position now was a more delicate one, for

the aid he had given to the escaping prisoner must be explained to the leader of the liberty men. However, Noah had slight fear of not being able to convince Smart Archie that he had acted wisely, and in his confidence he descended the ladder that led to the attic and at once sought the near-by camp.

"Here 's the fellow now!" exclaimed one of the men, as Noah approached a group that was standing near the little church, and excitedly talking together.

"What have you to say for yourself?" demanded the leader, as he stepped forward and peered into the face of the young soldier.

"I 'll tell you if you will come with me," replied Noah quietly.

"Come where?"

"Anywhere, so that we can talk without being heard by others."

"Say what you have to say right here."

"That I cannot do while these other men are here."

"You mean you will not," said Smart Archie sharply.

"As you please."

"Shoot him!" suggested one of the men. "He helped the man to get away. He deserves to be strung up!"

"You hear what these fellows say?" demanded Smart Archie.

"Yes, I hear."

"What have you to say?"

"Just what I said before."

"What 's that?"

"That I 'll explain it all if you will let me talk to you where these fellows can't overhear what is said."

"Don't ye do it, Archie! He 'll serve you a worse trick if he gets you alone. Make him speak up and be quick about it," suggested one of the band.

"Did you know the man got away?" asked the leader.

"No. I 'm glad he did."

"And yet you claim that you were with Light Horse Harry and are on your way to join Mad Anthony. The story is n't a very likely one."

As Noah did not reply, Smart Archie continued, "I hardly know whether to string you up on the nearest tree or to hear what you have to say."

"That is for you to decide."

"Step back, men!" said the leader, turning once more to the group. "Don't go far away. Keep us in sight all the time, and if this

fellow tries to work any of his tricks, shoot him as you would a dog!"

As the men reluctantly withdrew a short distance and left the young soldier with the leader of the liberty men, Smart Archie said roughly, "Now out with it! What have you to say? Be quick!"

"That man is n't just what he pretended to be," said Noah simply.

"What is he?"

"A good friend to the colonies."

"How do you know?"

"I can't tell you that, but —"

"Then you don't know anything about him."

"But I do know."

"How?"

"I can't tell you. You 'll have to take my word." Noah spoke simply as if what he said was final. "He knew me and called me by my name."

"Is that all you know?"

"It 's all I can tell you."

"And you helped him escape just because he knew your name?" asked Smart Archie sternly.

"No, sir. I told you he knew me, but I can't tell you anything more. You 'll have to take my word for some things."

"If you were so sure he was all right, why did n't you come to me? I would have fixed it all right."

"That sounds reasonable. I could n't do it, that 's all I can say now."

"So *you* took the responsibility of helping him, did you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I reckon you 'll have to take the rest of the responsibility, too."

"I 'm willing to do that."

"You are? You understand what it means?"

"I 'll take all the responsibility. When we get to the camp of the Marquis, or to Mad Anthony's, perhaps one or the other of them will tell you what I can't explain to you now."

"Suppose you never get to the camp of either of these men?"

"I shall have to take my chances along with the others."

"And you 'll not tell me who the man is?"

"No, sir."

"Will you tell me his name?"

"I 'm sorry, but I can't do even that. You 'll have to trust that what I am telling you is all right."

For a moment Smart Archie was silent,

manifestly perplexed. "You 'll have to own up that it is very strange."

"Yes, I know it is."

"Somehow, I 'm inclined to take you at your word," said the leader, in a low voice.

"Thank you, sir."

"Don't be too quick. You say that you will explain it all to the Marquis or to Mad Anthony?"

"Gladly."

"Then I 'll tell you what I 'll do. I have about decided not to wait here any longer. I 'll go ahead with George Baker and you, and let the men come along with Rob Mitchell. He knows the way and can handle these fellows better than I can. You 'll agree to that?"

"That he can handle the men better than you can? No."

"That is n't what I mean. You 'll agree to go with George and me?"

"You could n't suit me better."

"Then we 'll start to-morrow morning."

"Good."

"You 'll give me your word of honor that you won't try to get away from us?"

"Why, man, that 's the last thing I want. I don't know anything about this country.

The only reason I 've had for waiting here these three days has been to go on with somebody that knows the roads to the north. Get away from you? That 's the one thing I don't want."

"You won't object to having a guard tonight?"

"Not if you want to station one at the house. I 'm going to sleep. If we are to start north in the morning, I want to be in shape." Noah spoke as if a guard was of no importance to him, and the leader was duly impressed by his indifference, although it was manifest that he did not intend to be taken in any trap. "You see, I 'm doing this not because I don't believe what you say, but —"

"Don't say any more. I 'll go to my quarters now if you don't object," broke in Noah.

The young soldier at once departed, and although he was aware that Smart Archie was having some difficulty in explaining to his companions why he had permitted the stranger to go his way unmolested, he did not once look behind him to observe the result of the conference. Later he was aware that a guard had been stationed beneath his window, and also was certain that another was patrolling in front of the house, but he gave

no thought to either. In a brief time he was soundly sleeping, and when he awoke, the sunlight was streaming into the rude little attic where he had passed the night.

Soon after breakfast Smart Archie summoned him, and in a brief time the leader and George, each fairly well mounted, announced that they were ready to depart. Noah's horse was soon in readiness, and at once the trio set forth on their way to join the soldiers who were doing their utmost to protect the suffering people of Virginia and hold back the redcoats from devastating the homes of the scattered patriots.

It was plain to Noah, as they rode on, that neither of his companions was fully assured that he could be implicitly trusted. Both were quietly watchful of his every movement, though they seldom spoke. Noah, unmoved by what he discovered, did not attempt to convince either of his loyalty, though he smiled somewhat grimly as he thought of the experiences he had had since he had first been enrolled among the followers of Mad Anthony Wayne. How easy it would be for him to relate some of the stirring events, and not only to interest his companions, but also to restore their confidence in him. His chief anxiety

arose when he thought of the man whom he had assisted to escape. He wondered where he now was, and as he thought of the perilous project in which the man was engaged, he was fearful that he never would see him again. For the sake of the man's life he must be guarded in all references to him, Noah decided, and the silence which he had maintained concerning him must under no conditions be broken before the camp he was seeking had been gained.

It was near noon-time when Smart Archie drew the rein on the horse he was riding and said, "Yonder is the plantation of Major Gibbs. He is doubtless not at home, but I know his wife well, and if there is anything eatable about the place, I am sure she will set it before us. We 'll try it, anyway."

At the leader's suggestion all three turned from the road into the lane which led to the somewhat pretentious house in the distance. Their approach was observed by several black men, who gathered in front of the house and silently awaited their coming.

"Hello, Cain! Come and get our horses," called Smart Archie to a colored boy who was among the interested group of slaves. "Is the major at home?"

"'Deed he is n't," replied the grinning negro, as he recognized the leader and quickly advanced.

"I reckoned we would n't find him," laughed Smart Archie, as he alighted and then called upon his companions to follow his example. "Is your mistress here?"

"Ah spec she am."

"Then we 'll see her if you will tell her we are here. Cain, have they made a house servant of you since the war began? If I remember aright, you used to be a field hand."

"Yaas, suh! Yaas, suh!" replied Cain. "Ah sholy is in de house now."

"What do you do?"

"Ah 's wha' everybody else ain't."

"A good work!" laughed Smart Archie. "Now go in and tell Mistress Gibbs that I would like to speak to her."

As Cain obediently did as he was bidden, and speedily returned with word that the three horses were at once to be taken to the stables and the three visitors were to enter the house, Smart Archie at once led the way into the "mansion," followed by his two comrades.

The cordial greeting which the wife of the patriotic major gave the men, was soon fol-

lowed by an urgent invitation for them to remain as her guests as long as they desired. She did not explain that there was little food left on the plantation, but no explanations were required, for the place had been visited not long before by a body of troopers that had appropriated nearly everything of value to man or beast.

Noah was speedily aware, however, that the spirit of the woman was not broken by her deprivations, and if she was in any way afraid of the marauding bands of Tories or troopers that infested the region, she did not betray her fear in her bearing. She was keenly interested in all that Smart Archie had to tell of the plans of the men who were assembling and preparing to advance to the aid of the Continental forces.

The dinner she served was exceedingly simple, but her own courage served to make her unexpected guests unaware of any lack. Besides, they were hungry.

The meal was almost ended when Cain, with staring eyes and stammering tongue, rushed into the room, exclaiming: "De redcoats is come! Dey is in de lane now! Dey 're almos' yere! Dey sure is er million ob dem!"

CHAPTER VII

THE COMING OF THE TROOPERS

THE startled visitors rushed to the windows and the sight they beheld instantly confirmed the words of the frightened negro. A band of twenty or more mounted redcoats was riding leisurely up the lane that led to the house.

"They're not suspicious that any one is here," said Smart Archie, as he looked hastily at the band.

"One can't be sure!" responded Mrs. Gibbs quickly. "You must hide!"

"And leave you alone to face the troopers? We can't do that," said Smart Archie quietly. "We'll take our chances along with you."

"They will find our horses anyway," suggested Noah. "They will know that some men are here then, and they'll search the place."

"No! No!" pleaded the woman. "They may not look — they may not find the horses. Even if they do, they won't know that the animals do not belong on the plantation. You

must hide! Go up to the attic! Hide in the cellar! Be quick! Please, please do not delay! If you really want to help me, do what I tell you."

"We'll fix it this way," said Smart Archie, as he glanced again at the approaching band, which now was not more than fifty yards away. "Noah, you go into the cellar. George, you go up to the attic. If I call, you must both come at once. If I don't call, stay right where you are if it is till to-morrow morning. I have n't any uniform. The redcoats don't know me and they won't suspect me."

As both the young soldiers obeyed without protest and left the room, Mrs. Gibbs, who had been hastily piling up the dishes on the table, turned to Smart Archie and said excitedly, "If you must have your own way, then leave me alone in the dining-room. You can go out to meet the soldiers or stay in the house if you prefer, but don't stay here! Go! Don't delay a moment! Leave me! I'll call if I need your help," the intrepid woman added, as her visitor again hesitated.

Without protesting more, Smart Archie at once left the dining-room and went to the broad veranda in the front of the house. As he did so the troopers halted directly in front

of him and the leader, whom Smart Archie took to be a captain, leaned forward and said, "Am I correct in thinking this is the planta tion of Major Gibbs?"

"Yo' are, suh," replied Smart Archie, in the vernacular which he thought would be familiar to the officer. The young patriot was uncertain just what rôle would be best for him to assume. His first thought was to lead the men to believe that he was employed on the place, but he was keenly watching the men before him, prepared to act instantly upon any occasion that might arise.

"Of course, *you* are not Major Gibbs?"

"In co'se, suh," answered Smart Archie, gazing stupidly at the men who laughed good-naturedly at his words.

"Is he here?"

"No, suh."

"Do you know where he is?"

"I reck'n he is chasin' Tories."

The captain frowned as he inquired, "Where is that?"

"I dunno. Th' Tories get out right sma't when th' major starts fo' 'em."

"Is his wife here?"

"I reck'n she mought be somewhar 'bout yere."

"Tell her I want to speak to her."

"I dunno jes' whar I 'll —"

"Go look her up! If you are as stupid as you appear to be, we may have to give you a lift or two. Be quick! Tell her I want to see her!"

"Tell her who wants t' see her?"

"I do," said the captain sharply.

"Who are you?" drawled Smart Archie. "I reck'n I did n't jes' catch yo' name, did I?"

Some of the troopers laughed as Smart Archie's drawling query was heard, but the captain plainly was not amused. "Tell her to come out here," he ordered. "That's enough for you to say."

"Yaas, suh." Entering the house Smart Archie found Mrs. Gibbs in the hall. In spite of the peril which the coming of the troopers meant, the intrepid woman met the young soldier smilingly. "I heard what you said to the men," she said in a low voice. "You go back and tell the captain that I am busy in the dining-room. If he wants to see me he can come there. I 'm not in the habit of receiving any but gentlemen, and they usually send in their names."

"Do you think that is the wisest plan?"

"Yes, yes."

"If you make them angry —"

"It 's all right. You give him my message. Keep up your way of talking. You are my overseer. Don't forget that! Now go back and tell the captain what I said."

Smart Archie obediently returned to the veranda, the expression of his face as he greeted the captain being even more blank than when he had left him.

"Well, is the woman coming out?" demanded the captain.

"No, suh."

"Why not?" asked the angry captain. "I fancy she does n't know who I am."

"Da 's des hit," said Smart Archie soberly.

"What do you mean?"

"She done say she does n't know yo'."

"Tell her she will find out!"

"Yaas, suh," responded Smart Archie, as he made as if he was about to reënter the house with his message.

"Hold on, you bumpkin!" roared the captain, his anger increasing as he became aware that his men were enjoying the conversation.

"Yaas, suh." The young patriot stopped and solemnly stared at the officer.

"Where is she?"

"In th' dining-room, I reckon. She was there when I left her."

"Why won't she come out?"

"She says she is in th' habit o' receivin' her visitors in th' house. She says she mos' gen'lly knows th' name o' th' people what come yere. They sends in their names — "

"Here! Hold my horse!" shouted the angry officer, as he tossed his reins to the nearest soldier and leaped nimbly to the ground. "Now lead me to the room where she is!" he added, as he turned to the "overseer."

Without a word Smart Archie conducted the captain to the dining-room, and as he entered he said slowly, "Here is th' man what wanted to pay his respects."

"Good-morning," said Mrs. Gibbs quietly, as she faced the intruder. "Did you wish to speak to me?"

"Yes, madam. Is this the home of the rebel Gibbs?"

"This is where Major Gibbs resides."

"Where is he?"

"Where every true man is — with others, defending his oppressed country."

"Those are bold words, madam."

"Are they?" inquired Mrs. Gibbs simply.

"He 'll get his just deserts!" said the captain shortly.

"No true man can desire more than that."

"He will get what perhaps he does n't desire."

Mrs. Gibbs did not reply, but her smiling air of indifference served to irritate her impatient visitor still more. Smart Archie was standing in the doorway of the room, and his general expression of stupidity was even more pronounced than ever.

"This plantation of yours will be a part of the dukedom which Colonel Tarleton will receive when the rebellion has been crushed," said the visitor.

"I hear that Tarleton has already received something at the hands of Colonel William Washington," retorted Mrs. Gibbs, referring to the well-known story of the cut on the hand which the British leader had received from the patriot soldier in a recent engagement.

"He will have the land," said the captain, scowling.

"I agree with you that he will have some land in America, but it will not be what you or he will enjoy."

"To what land do you refer?" asked the captain mockingly.

"I refer to land — six feet, two inches in length by three in breadth."

A smothered laugh came from Smart Archie at the retort of the fearless woman, and the angry captain's face flushed at the sound.

"Leave the room!" said Mrs. Gibbs sternly to Smart Archie, whose face had quickly resumed its former stolid expression. "Our overseers," she added, as once more she faced her visitor, "have so little to do since your men have taken to robbing our women that sometimes they become well-nigh unbearable. You must pardon his boorishness."

"Enough of this, madam!" exclaimed the officer. "Tell me where your husband is!"

"He is, I trust, with the Marquis by this time."

"Do you give me your word of honor that he is not here?"

"You can see for yourself."

"You do not answer my question."

"Pray ask it once more."

"Is your husband here?"

"I do not see him anywhere," replied the dauntless woman, as she glanced about the room in which she and her visitor were standing.

"You women are worse rebels than the

men!" exclaimed the captain. "After we shall have crushed the rebellion we shall still have to deal with the women of the colonies! You are vixens! You are vipers! You are —"

"'Polite?' was that the word you wanted?" broke in Mrs. Gibbs, as the intruder faltered.

"I shall be obliged to search your place."

"Obliged? To whom?" inquired Mrs. Gibbs smilingly.

Exasperated almost beyond control by the coolness of the woman before him, the angry captain in loud tones said, "We shall search the premises! I promise you that if we find your rebel husband we shall deal severely with him —"

"He is not a man that will permit that," broke in the major's wife. "He threw a red-coat out of the second-story window the last time he was home. He found the sneaking Tory creeping into his room."

"He 'll have to deal with —"

"A captain of the Queen's dragoons?"

"Yes. And more."

"Captain Abernathy, you cannot frighten me."

"How do you know who I am?" asked the startled officer.

"By the reports of your brave deeds on some

of our neighbors' plantations when the men are away from home. You answer the description perfectly. Please excuse me from any further conversation. If you must know, I will tell you that my husband — Major Gibbs — has not been home for four weeks. I am at your mercy, but that is something for which I shall never ask. You doubtless will feel somewhat safer now that you know my husband is not here to protect me or his possessions. I have been expecting a visit from you and your troopers, but I knew it would not be until such a time as you had positive knowledge that Major Gibbs was not at home. Pray do not let me delay you in the plundering for which you and your hired butchers have come."

The wife of Major Gibbs at once departed from the room, nor did she once glance back at the intruder as she passed into the spacious hall.

Quickly the abashed but still angry captain withdrew and rejoined his men. As he mounted his horse he gave a sharp order to his followers, and the band at once rode toward the barns. There the troopers halted, and at the command of the captain formed in line along the lane in front of the barns. Four then dismounted and entered the barns,

leaving their companions to look after their horses while they were gone.

Several frightened and yet grinning negroes came and stood staring at the band of scarlet-clad horsemen. In a brief time, too, the "overseer" came sauntering near the line, his face expressionless as he looked at the soldiers, some of whom laughingly asked if he did not wish to join them. Smart Archie, however, did not reply to any of the bantering queries as he slowly passed the line. Occasionally he stopped to stare at some trooper better mounted than his fellows, but his silence was still unbroken.

Suddenly as he came near to the end of the line a commotion broke out among the horses. Some of them reared so suddenly that their riders were almost unseated, while others of the frantic animals were rearing, kicking, plunging as they leaped about in the lane. The commotion quickly spread to the riders, and there were shouts and calls and exclamations of rage as the men vainly strove to control their terrified steeds. Pulling on their reins, striking their horses or one another, the soldiers speedily were joined by their comrades from the barns. But Smart Archie had disappeared in the woods at the left of the lane.

CHAPTER VIII

A DIVIDED PATH

EXCITEDLY watching the strange antics of horses and men, Noah and George from their hiding-places were unable to account for the commotion. The terrified horses were plunging about in the lane, and more than a few of the riders had been unseated. Captain Abernathy, ignorant of the cause of the disturbance, was riding swiftly toward the place where his men had been stationed and calling loudly upon his followers to cease their peculiar antics; but even he as he came nearer was aware that it was no prank which the redcoats were playing. Indeed his own horse, as the angry captain approached, suddenly emitted a snort of terror and began to kick viciously as it leaped about in the lane.

"S-seems t-to b-be s-something a bit q-q-ueer," said George in a low voice to Noah, who now had joined his comrade in the hall of the "mansion."

"Certainly does," responded Noah, laugh-

ing, as the commotion suddenly increased. "I don't understand it."

"Y-you don't k-know Smart A-a-archie."

"Did he have anything to do with it?"

"H-he was t-there a s-spell a-ago, w-was n't he?"

"Yes, but he went on into the woods."

"S-so h-he d-d-did, b-but b-b-before h-he went h-he h-he—"

"Well, what did he do?" demanded Noah impatiently.

"S-see t-those g-gum-t-tree b-b-b—"

"Those beehives?"

"T-that's w-what I w-was s-s-saying when y-you s-stopped m-me."

"Did Smart Archie kick over those hives?" asked Noah quickly, as a faint suspicion of the cause of the trouble dawned upon him.

"I d-did n't s-see h-him d-d-do it," grinned George.

"You think he did?"

"Y-you c-can s-see f-f-for yo'self."

"That's it!" exclaimed Noah, in a low voice. "He pushed over the last two or three hives in the row and then he took to the woods. That's just what he did!"

"Y-you h-have heard of f-fighting t-th' redcoats with g-g-guns, have n't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, n-now y-you see that S-smart A-a-archie c-can f-fight 'em with b-b-bees."

"Yes, and drive them off too!"

"Can't t-t-tell yet," said George dubiously. "Hark! w-what 's that?"

The report of a gun in the near-by woods was suddenly heard, but the redcoats, fully engaged in their attempts to control their frantic steeds or trying to keep the furious little pests from attacking the soldiers of the King, apparently, were unmindful of the warning sound.

The two boys now were standing outside the house, and in their interest in the spectacle of the strangely acting dragoons had not once glanced behind them since the plunging horses had begun their strange antics. At this moment, however, a quick call from an upper window at once drew their attention, and as they saw Mrs. Gibbs leaning out they turned and ran to the veranda. Entering the house, they were met by the intrepid woman with a rifle in one hand and a huge pistol in the other.

"Here!" she called eagerly. "Take these! They are loaded and primed!"

"What 's wrong?" asked Noah quietly.

"Everything, I 'm afraid. My husband has been three days in the swamp."

"Any one with him?"

"Only a few neighbors."

"The redcoats won't find him," said Noah, striving to console the excited woman.

"No! no! That's not it. I'm not afraid of that. He has found the dragoons. That shot you heard a moment ago was his. I'm sure it was. He probably was coming up to the house, and when he got to the lane he saw the redcoats and fired."

"H-he d-did n't f-fire," suggested George. "T-there w-was only one shot. I did n't s-s-see t-that any one w-was hit, so it c-c-could n't have been y-your husband. He w-would n't have m-m-m-m —"

Mrs. Gibbs did not smile as George spoke, but stood listening intently for a sound she expected and manifestly feared to hear. Almost at that moment the commotion among the dragoons increased. Two of their horses were running toward the barns, and each was without a rider. Not a man had been seen coming from the woods from which the shot had been fired. As the smoke from the discharge of the guns cleared away, the watchers in the house saw that the captain's horse was dashing swiftly toward the place, but the captain was not in the saddle.

"If any of those redcoats try to get into the house, shoot!" called Mrs. Gibbs to her two defenders. "I must go upstairs a moment. Don't leave the hall," she called, as she ran to the staircase, "and don't let any one in! I shall be back in a moment."

Again the report of guns rang out from the woods, and the two young soldiers turned quickly to learn what the redcoats were doing. Near the barns were several wagons that had been loaded with the supplies which the marauders had discovered in the buildings. Horses were hitched to these wagons and some of the negroes about the plantation had been compelled to mount to the seats, prepared to assist in the transportation of the supplies. The sound of the guns, however, had so frightened the drivers that they had thrown away the reins and leaping to the ground were scampering toward the cabins not far away.

The dragoons now hastily withdrew from the lane, having at last somehow managed to secure control once more of their horses; with one of the barns between them and the place from which the shots had come, they had halted, and it was plain that a hasty consultation was being held.

At this moment Mrs. Gibbs came running swiftly down the stairway of the house and joined the two young soldiers in the hall. "I am so afraid he will come to the house," she said tremblingly.

"Who will come?" asked Noah quickly.

"My husband. He will think I am in peril."

"Do you think he fired on the redcoats?"

"Yes, yes. He was to come to the house this morning. When he started and saw the dragoons there in the lane, I know him so well that I am sure he fired on them from the woods. I wish he had not done so. He was fearful for me, and I know he did not stop to think of the danger."

"He can't be alone. There were three or four shots fired, anyway."

"There are six or eight men hiding in the swamp. They are waiting for more to come. The major — my husband — came here for recruits. He had word somehow that our place was to be raided by the dragoons, so he thought it would be safer for the men to meet and stay in the swamp. I was to send one of the 'boys' if I was in any danger."

"Did you send him word?"

"No. And now the negroes have fled to

their cabins. I am sure my husband does not know the full peril he is in. He will think of my danger and will stop at nothing."

"What you want is for one of us to go to him?" asked Noah.

"Oh, if you only would!" exclaimed Mrs. Gibbs eagerly. "I have no fears for my safety. The worst the dragoons will do will be to search the house and steal whatever they may wish. I am not afraid for myself. But if he comes here —"

"I will try to get to him," broke in Noah quietly.

"But you, too, may get into trouble," suggested Mrs. Gibbs, alarmed now for the safety of the young soldier. "And yet he must have word. Oh, these are terrible times for us all!"

"I shall do my best," said Noah. "Let me have the bullet-pouch and the powder-horn that go with this gun and I'll start at once. You must give me the directions."

"My husband and the men who are with him must be in the woods just beyond the lane, unless by this time some of the redcoats have driven them away. I have not heard any shots for two or three minutes," she added.

"I went upstairs and tried to see from the window, but I could not make out anything.

If he could only go back to the island in the swamp he would be safe; and I am sure I shall be, anyway."

"P-perhaps h-h-he has g-g-gone," suggested George.

"I'll soon know," said Noah. "Now, then, please tell me how to get to the island, in case I don't find him in the woods. I don't believe that he has gone back yet. He knows the dragoons are still here."

"There's a path you'll find near the big forked tree in the woods directly back from the lane. You can't mistake it. Follow that path till it divides, and then take the path to the left — the other is only a blind. The left path divides again, but you must turn again to the left, for the right is only another blind path. It's not safe and not very clear, but maybe you'll find the major without having to go into the swamp."

"Don't have any fears for me," said Noah, trying to relieve the woman's anxiety. "Very likely the redcoats will leave anyway, now that they know men are on the plantation. We'll soon know and I'll not be gone long."

"Go this way," said Mrs. Gibbs hastily, as she led the way to the rear of the house.

"Maybe you can go around through the

orchard and gain the woods that way without being seen by any of the dragoons."

Noah did not reply, and carrying his rifle in his hand he departed from the house, moving quickly into the orchard to which Mrs. Gibbs had directed him. He was able to see the dragoons, some of whom were riding about the place as if they were searching for the men who had fired upon the troopers.

The loaded wagons were still standing near the barns, although their drivers had disappeared and had not returned. Not a shot had been heard for some time now, and Noah, as he moved stealthily among the trees, was hopeful that the major and his men had abandoned their apparently foolhardy task of attacking the dragoons and had returned to their stronghold in the swamp — a place which Noah well understood from his experiences in the South would be safe from attack. The redcoats were not often to be drawn from solid ground into the treacherous ways of the many swamps which of late for this very reason had been selected by the assembling patriots for their hiding-places.

Noah was more interested in the occasional glimpses he had of the moving dragoons than in his own way towards the woods. He had

gained the border of the latter when he suddenly found himself face to face with three of the troopers who, unmounted, had been searching the vicinity for signs of the presence of the men who had fired upon them in the midst of the confusion which had arisen when Smart Archie had overturned the gum-tree beehives and the angry bees had fallen upon the unsuspecting soldiers.

"Surrender, you sneaking rebel!" shouted one of the troopers, as all three rushed upon him.

Instantly Noah brought his rifle to his shoulder and fired. Before he was able to turn, however, one of the dragoons struck him in the shoulder with his sword and immediately the men threw themselves upon him. The young wrestler was fighting for his life. His rifle was torn from his hands, but before the man could raise it Noah had seized him and thrown him with all his strength against the second soldier who also was striving to seize him. The impact of the two bodies was so great that both men were hurled to the ground, and before they arose, or Noah was able to see what they could next attempt to do, he had leaped over their bodies and at his utmost speed was running into the woods.

In his flight, for a time his sole thought was of escaping the redcoats. He fled until he was suddenly aware that a huge forked tree stood directly in front of him, and the sight instantly recalled the directions which Mrs. Gibbs had given him. Pausing for a moment to make certain that his pursuers were not already upon him, he glanced quickly through the woods and saw that the lane was near by. This, he concluded, was the tree which he was to seek. He looked upon the ground and saw before him the outlines of a pathway.

There was no delay as he darted forward. In his excitement it seemed to him that he heard the sound of snapping branches behind him. His speed increased, and it was not long before he found himself at the spot where the pathway divided. An instant he halted as he tried to recall the instruction of Mrs. Gibbs. Was he to turn to the right or to the left? He had forgotten. Without delaying, he resumed his flight, selecting the path on his right.

The ground was softer now, and at times he was compelled to leap from one little hummock to another. His flight, however, was unbroken, until in one attempt to jump, the ground beneath him gave way and he was thrown pros-

trate in the mud. Even the pursuing redcoats, however, instantly were forgotten when, on lifting his head, he beheld swimming toward him over the filthy water the hugest snake he had ever seen. It was a moccasin and deadly poisonous, as Noah well knew. And yet he was helpless to defend himself. Indeed, he did not even dare to attempt to rise from the filth into which he had fallen.

CHAPTER IX

A PLACE OF REFUGE

LIFTING his hand Noah waved it slowly back and forth, trying to attract the attention of his enemy, which he feared more than he did the pursuing redcoats. If he should arise he well knew that the moccasin would at once attack him, and yet to remain motionless was to leave himself at the mercy of the poisonous reptile.

Almost fascinated by the sight, Noah stared at the snake as it slowly advanced over the mud and filthy water. Somehow it seemed to the young soldier that he had been in his present position for hours. His body seemed to be numb, and even his first feeling of alarm was gone. The huge snake manifestly was aware of his presence and was steadily approaching.

As Noah still waved his hand slowly, the moccasin suddenly coiled. The snake now was not more than five or six feet distant. Sluggish as its movements seemed to be, the young soldier was keenly aware that he was at its mercy. He glanced quickly about him, hoping

to see some stick or club with which he might defend himself, but was not able to find any. If he should attempt to struggle to his feet and flee from the spot, he was confident that such an action would only serve to hasten the attack. The snake was coiled now and prepared to spring. Even in his peril Noah was aware of the coloring of the hideous body. The little eyes seemed to glisten in the sunlight. In the huge body he knew there was ample power to enable the slimy reptile to reach him. Still slowly waving his hand Noah did not look away from the hideous sight in front, and although he was almost hopeless of escaping there was a strange feeling of indifference in his heart as he looked steadily at the coiled snake. He thought the angry reptile was about to strike, and then wondered why it delayed. All idea of time was gone. He was conscious merely that for some unknown reason his peril was prolonged, though he had no question as to his fate.

Suddenly there was a hissing sound for a moment, and then as Noah watched the moccasin a startling change occurred. The reptile was twisting and turning, lashing the muddy water, and the slimy body appeared to be moving in almost every direction at the same time, yet no more toward the helpless young

soldier than away from him. And then Noah suddenly was aware of the cause of the commotion, as he saw that the moccasin's head had been almost severed from its body. Instantly Noah knew that the moment for him to act had come. How the snake had been served as it had been, he had not the faintest conception. It was enough that he was free from the immediate peril, and, delaying no longer, he frantically struggled to his feet, and after a great effort regained the pathway which he had lost. As he stepped upon the firmer ground he beheld before him a young Indian not much if any older than he himself. In the Indian's hand was a bow, and instantly Noah understood the meaning of the contortions of the moccasin and his escape from his deadly peril, for manifestly the young Indian had shot the snake. The hissing sound which he had heard for an instant was also explained now.

For a brief time the two young men gazed quietly at each other, while neither moved from the position in which he was standing.

Noah was the first to speak as he said quietly, "Creek?"

The Indian indignantly shook his head as he replied, "Cherokee."

The Cherokees, as Noah was aware, had been for the greater part drawn into friendly relations with the redcoats. The patriots had done their utmost to induce the tribe to side with them or to remain neutral in the great struggle, but their efforts had been in vain. For some reason, which no one clearly understood, the tribe had given their allegiance to the soldiers of King George. Thinking of this, Noah, as he looked steadily at the young Cherokee, wondered if he had escaped one enemy only to be cast helpless into the power of another. He himself was unarmed now, and although the Cherokee had no gun, his skill in the use of the bow and arrow was evident from what had befallen the coiled moccasin. Its head had been severed from the body almost as if it had been cut by a knife, leaving the hideous object hanging only by a strip of skin. His own appearance, too, was not in his favor, as Noah well knew. His hair and face were covered with mud, his clothing was soaked with the filth of the swamp, and the excitement through which he had just passed had left him trembling and uncertain. Besides, his first feeling, as the young Indian calmly explained that he was one of the Cherokees, had made him somewhat fearful of the

warrior of whose skill in the use of the bow and arrow he had been a witness.

"Where are you going?" Noah managed to inquire at last.

The Cherokee did not reply to the question, and still stood looking calmly at the young soldier.

"I must leave this swamp," said Noah. "Can you take me out?"

"Come," said the Indian quietly, as he turned abruptly and led the way along the path which Noah hardly recognized as he retraced his way.

His companion plainly understood what had been said to him; that was manifest by what he had said and done. For a time Noah followed without speaking. He noticed the wiry strength of his guide, the ease with which he leaped from one little mound of earth to another, and was convinced that in a personal contest the Indian would be no mean antagonist. He continued watchful of the actions of his leader, but at last when the Indian arrived at the fork in the pathway and without stopping turned into the one that led to the left, Noah recalled what Mrs. Gibbs had said to him. He had turned to the right in his flight instead of to the left, as the woman had

bidden him. But the left pathway led to the island where the major and his friend had their refuge. The recollection increased the confusion of the young soldier, but he made no protest as in silence he still followed his guide.

A half-hour elapsed before the Indian halted beside a little stream that was at least ten feet wide. Its waters were discolored, and Noah was not able to estimate its depth. On the opposite bank the ground seemed to be firm, and just beyond were thick bushes that hid from sight all that lay behind them.

The Cherokee stopped and emitted a low call. As he heard the summons or signal, Noah quickly looked about him and then listened intently for a response to the hail. The silence was unbroken, nor did any one come to the bank. Once more the Cherokee uttered his low cry, and then, after a brief silence, gave a low exclamation as he stepped back a few feet as if he was preparing to leap across the stream. Before Noah fully realized what his guide's plan was, the Indian ran forward and without any apparent effort jumped and alighted lightly on the opposite bank. Even then he did not look back, nor did he call to his companion to follow him.

However, Noah did not intend to be left

behind, and quickly withdrawing a few feet he, too, ran and leaped across the intervening brook. As he gained the other bank he quickly looked about him to see what had become of the young Indian, but the Cherokee was nowhere to be seen, nor was there at first any indication of a path which he might have followed. The bushes were dense and high, and not far beyond were some tall trees.

Suddenly he discerned a faint trace of a path in the midst of the overhanging brush. Scarcely aware of what he was doing, Noah pushed aside the bushes and stepped forward. The pathway soon became more distinct and his speed increased. He had not seen a trace of his guide, nor had he any means of knowing whither the pathway led; but he did not hesitate, for in spite of his suspicion of the Cherokee he somehow was confident that the hiding-place of Major Gibbs could not be far away. The directions which the wife of the major had given him, as he now recalled them, all tended to confirm him in his belief.

"Stop! Stop right whar yo' be!"

At the unexpected command Noah looked all about him, but not a person was to be seen. The woods were denser now, and the ground was firm beneath his feet. Who had hailed

him, or where the strange command had been uttered, he was unable to perceive. However, he stopped obediently, every sense tense and alert, and waited for the hail to be repeated or a fresh direction to be given him.

"Whar yo' all come from?" Again the strange voice was heard and this time it sounded directly above him, but when he looked up into the trees he still was unable to discover any one. The voice was deep and somewhat guttural, but it was not threatening.

"Come down here and I'll tell you," replied Noah, looking upward as he spoke.

"Whar yo' all come from?"

The demand was repeated, and the voice was deeper and sterner than before.

"Out of the swamp," said Noah.

"Wha' yo' all want?"

"Is Major Gibbs here?"

Although he was by no means certain that he was on the border of the major's hiding-place, Noah nevertheless was of the opinion that he could not be far away and therefore ventured the question.

"Wha' fo' yo' want ter see him?"

Noah was peering up into the tree, but still was not able to see the man whose voice he plainly heard.

"Is he here?" he demanded sharply, decided for the time at least to continue his questions rather than declare openly why he was on the island, for such he believed the place really to be.

"Ah don' see him yere," replied the unseen man.

"I must see him! I have word for him that is most important."

"Wha' yo' all wan' ter tell him?"

"He'll know when I see him. Where is he?"

There was a sound in the dense tree above him as if some one was descending, and in a moment a huge negro swung himself lightly from the lowest branch and stood before the young soldier. The sight was startling to Noah, not only because of the unexpected action, but also because he had never before looked upon a black man as large as the one who now faced him. The man was powerful, too, as the great knotted muscles in his bare arms and shoulders plainly indicated. The expression of his face was wild and fierce, and as Noah realized what an impression his own appearance must create, his alarm was by no means quieted as he looked at the black man before him.

"Wha' fo' yo' all want ter see him fo'?" repeated the negro.

"I have word from his wife."

"Wha' she want?"

"I'll tell that to the major."

The huge black looked at Noah a moment in silence, and then he said brusquely, "Yo' all come yere."

Turning abruptly the negro advanced along the obscure path, holding back the heavy brush in places for Noah to follow, and the young soldier instantly did as he was bidden. In a brief time they arrived at a little clearing in the midst of which a hut of logs was standing, and seated in the doorway was the young Cherokee who had saved Noah from the venomous moccasin. But not a white man was to be seen about the place.

Noah's conviction that this was Major Gibbs's hiding-place was confirmed, and he decided quickly that the Indian and the negro were both friends of the major in spite of his knowledge that the Cherokee belonged to a nation whose activities were largely on the side of the redcoats. The Indian did not speak as the two men approached the house, although he looked with manifest interest at the mud-bespattered Noah.

"Is yo' all a frien' ob de major?" inquired the black man.

"I never saw him, but I am a good friend. If you must know, then I don't mind telling you that a dozen dragoons have attacked his plantation —"

The black man with a yell interrupted Noah and instantly ran to the rear of the hut. In a moment he returned with a rifle in his hands, while a small axe was thrust into his belt.

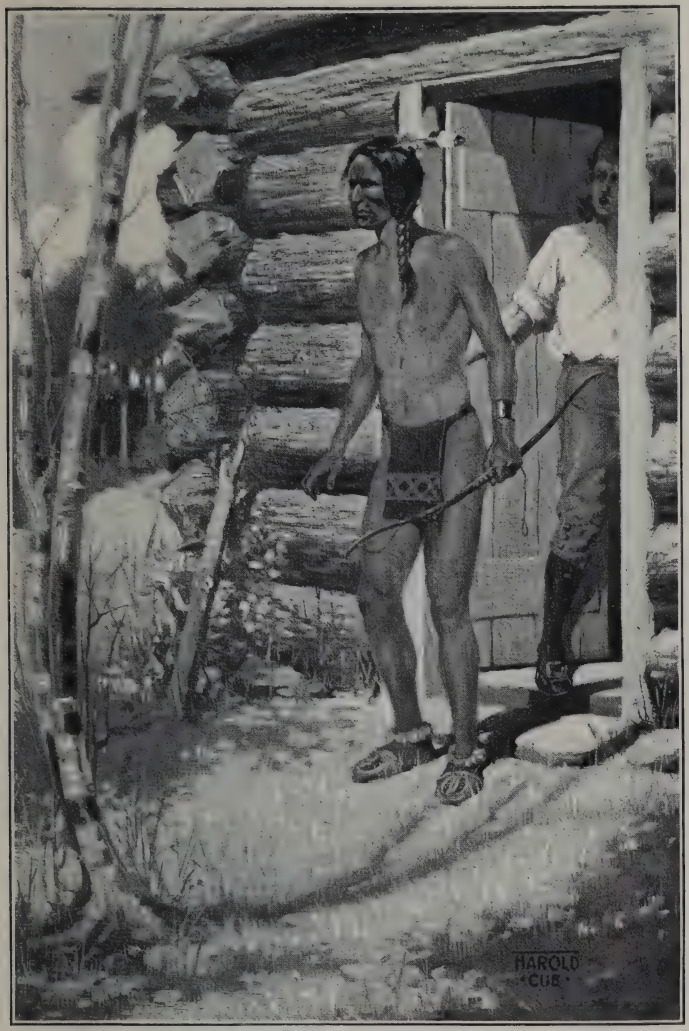
"Yo', Nick, yo' all stay yere!" the negro said to the Cherokee, and almost before the words were spoken he vanished from the place, running swiftly in the direction from which he and Noah had recently come.

Startled and perplexed by the unexpected action, Noah turned to the Indian and asked, "Has the negro gone to the big house?"

The Cherokee nodded but did not speak.

"Then I'll go, too," said Noah.

Before the Indian could protest, however, a shout was heard from the near-by swamp — a prolonged and weird cry as of some one in terror or pain. The startled Indian leaped to his feet and stood intently listening for the cry to be repeated.



LISTENING FOR THE CRY

CHAPTER X

THE DEPARTURE

THE silence that rested over the swamp was unbroken. The Cherokee, whom Noah had heard called "Nick" by the negro, crept stealthily along the path and left the young soldier alone in front of the hut. As the Indian disappeared in the brush, Noah at first was minded to follow him; but delaying until the Cherokee had disappeared, he decided to await his return where he then was.

The moments dragged on slowly, but the strange cry was not heard nor did Nick come back. When an hour had elapsed, Noah abandoned his vigil and entered the cabin. A double row of bunks around two sides of the room indicated how the friends of the major were quartered. There was a large fireplace in one end of the room, and both the doors in the front and rear were heavy, and he at once saw that they were designed for protection in case of an attack upon the place. A rack for guns was above the fireplace, and a table in the middle of the room had been made of rough boards.

Three logs that had been chipped by a broad-axe served as seats. The entire place had been built for safety, and as Noah looked about him he was satisfied that the log house could withstand a long siege.

His inspection completed, Noah next gave his attentions to his own person. The mud upon his face and clothing had dried, and his first task was to find water, for apparently there was none in the house. He passed through the rear door and spied a path that led into the woods beyond. Following this path as it led up an incline, he soon came to a depression in the ground where he saw a spring. A large gourd was on the ground near by, and the young soldier at once began his ablutions.

So busy was he in this task that he took no note of the passing time, and when he returned to the hut he was surprised as he saw that the sun already was below the tops of the tall trees.

His left arm was sore from the blow which he had received when he had been attacked in the orchard near the big house, but he had been so excited in the midst of the experiences that followed that he had been unaware of the wound until he had removed his coat and shirt in his duties at the spring. The blow had

been a glancing one, and though his arm had bled freely it did not appear to have been seriously injured. Still it pained him, and when he entered the hut he began to search the place for a bandage. This he soon found, for Major Gibbs plainly had prepared for such emergencies. The sight of some rough garments hanging from pegs on one side of the room instantly suggested the possibility of dry clothing, and Noah quickly exchanged the garments he had been wearing for others which he appropriated, thinking that their owners would soon return, when he would again resume his own. Meanwhile he would remove a part of the mud and filth of the swamp with which they had been covered.

When this task had been accomplished the dusk was creeping on. He had confidently believed that the Indian or some of the band of Major Gibbs would have returned before this, but not a sound as yet had been heard to break the heavy silence. Puzzled by the failure of any one to come, Noah next became aware that he was hungry.

A search of the place revealed some cornmeal and bacon — the only food in the building. He glanced at the fireplace and decided at once to make use of it. Some pine-knots were in

a pile near the hut, and with these and by means of the flint and tinder which he discovered on a rude shelf he soon had a roaring fire.

The task of cooking his simple supper was easily accomplished, and Noah soon was feasting upon the viands he had prepared. When at last his hunger was appeased, he was aware that darkness had come. The shrill cry of a nighthawk was answered by the prolonged hooting of an owl that had perched on one of the trees on the island. A feeling of loneliness crept over the young soldier. He was tempted to leave the place, but a thought of what had befallen him when he had mistaken his way that very day held him back. If such a mistake was possible in broad daylight, what might not occur in the darkness? Again he fancied he almost could see the hideous moccasin slowly approaching over the soft mud. The recollection was so vivid that Noah instantly decided to remain where he was. Doubtless, too, either the huge negro or Nick would soon return. He stepped out into the night, listening for some sound that would indicate their approach, but the lonesome owl and the sharply calling nighthawk were the only signs of life in the appalling silence. The tall trees were motion-

less, and the long bare branches of two dead pines not far away were almost like ghostly arms pointing toward the depths of the swamp. In a brief time Noah turned and reëntered the log house. He threw more knots upon the fire which had burned low. Somehow he was not fearful of an attack, for there was slight probability of any redcoats trying to penetrate the dark depths of the swamp. Only a man thoroughly familiar with its mysterious paths would dare to make such an attempt. The recollection of the one long weird cry which had caused Nick hastily to depart from the island increased the feeling of uneasiness that crept over the young soldier. Why did not the Indian return? He thought, too, of Smart Archie and George, and found himself wondering where they now were and what had befallen them. And the intrepid wife of Major Gibbs — had she succeeded in warning her husband of his danger? Had the big house been ransacked by the dragoons? All these questions, as well as many others, presented themselves to the mind of the troubled young soldier. At last, wearied by the events of the day and convinced now that neither Nick nor the huge negro would return to the hut before morning, Noah carefully barred both doors, and then taking a block of wood for a

pillow stretched himself on the earthen floor in front of the fireplace and soon was sleeping soundly.

It was daylight when he awoke, and, startled by his surroundings, a minute passed before he fully recalled where he was and why he was there. Hastily arising, he unbarred and flung open the door in the front of the hut and looked out into the swamp. Not a person was within sight. He was positive also that no one had been near the place in the night. Perplexed and yet restored by his long and heavy sleep, Noah speedily prepared his breakfast of corn-meal and bacon. He restored the clothing he had appropriated, retaining only the coat, which he was convinced its owner would not begrudge him when he should be informed as to who had taken it. His own coat was badly torn and almost useless. Without delay he at once departed from the hut. To remain longer was impossible.

Leaping across the sluggish stream he soon discovered the path over which he and the young Cherokee had come the preceding day, and rapidly followed it. When he arrived at the fork he was not able to repress the shudder that passed over him as he recalled his adventure with the moccasin. Why had Nick

been there at just the moment when his aid was most needed? Had the Indian been following him? Noah was unable to think of any replies to his questions, but he still kept steadily on his way, determined that this time he would not mistake the directions. He was unarmed save for a stout club in his hands, for though he had searched the hut diligently before his departure, he had not found any weapons. Doubtless, he had concluded, the major and his men had not been well provided with firearms, and when they had gone to the big house they had taken with them all the weapons they possessed.

It was not long before Noah once more found himself near the orchard in which he had been attacked by the three dragoons. He crept stealthily forward, doubly watchful now and prepared to dart back among the trees if his presence should be discovered.

Suddenly the young soldier stopped and stared blankly at the sight before him. A mass of blackened ruins, still smoking, marked the spot where the mansion had stood the preceding day. He turned hastily and looked toward the barns. They, too, had disappeared, and the ruin was still sending up little clouds of smoke. He moved forward,

looking eagerly about him for the sight of men about the ruined place, but not a man was to be seen. Desolation was over all. Even the trees that had stood in front of the stately mansion were blackened and dead. Indeed, not a living creature, not even a chicken or a pig, was to be seen.

Aghast at the desolate scene, a feeling of fierce anger swept over Noah. For a moment he even forgot his anxiety for the fate of Mrs. Gibbs. That she had done her best to protect her property he was convinced, but how she herself had fared was still a mystery. Something of a more complete understanding of the horror of it all filled his mind. And all that the colonists were fighting for was their liberty. There was need of fighting if such deeds as these were to be common, he grimly thought, and even as he stood gazing angrily at the desolate scene he was aware that what had befallen the major was not exceptional. How many of the patriots had endured as much or more at the hands of the redcoats or of the still more detested and detestable Tories! The rage of Noah burned still more strongly when at last, convinced that he was alone upon the plantation, he advanced toward the smouldering heaps. His failure to find

any horses on the plantation, and the absence of the wagons which he had seen loaded with the products of the place, were facts that plainly indicated what the dragoons had done in addition to setting fire to all the buildings. Noah's feeling of rage increased. For a moment even his own helplessness was forgotten. His horse had been taken, he was without any means of defending himself, he had no food, he was ignorant of the way he should take to join the army in the north, and he was alone. Even the negroes of the plantation were gone.

It was not long, however, before the young soldier was recalled to the necessity of action, for to remain where he then was was impossible. At last, heavy of heart, he turned into the lane that led toward the road, and as he proceeded he frequently stopped to look back upon the scene of desolation. He had almost gained the road and was passing through a stretch of woods, when he was startled by the sight of a man who was seated on the stump of a tree near the spot where the lane ended. A hasty glance, however, revealed to him that the waiting man was Duncan.

Relieved by the knowledge, Noah ran forward and greeted the young Scotchman.

"Yonder ees a peety, mon," said Duncan, nodding his head in the direction of the ruined plantation.

"What do you know about it?" asked Noah eagerly. "Were you here? Do you know what has become of Major Gibbs? Where is Smart Archie? How do you happen to be here?"

"Mon," said Duncan solemnly, "ye ken weel that ye 're talkin' nonsense. I reck'n it was foreordained that I should be here the noo."

"All right! All right," said Noah, after he had stared a moment blankly at his companion. "But do you know where Major Gibbs is? What has become of Smart Archie? And where is George? Where are the men you were with?"

"I wouldna stay. Smart Archie canna order me aboot like a whippet."

"So you deserted?"

"Mon, I 'm tellin' ye 't was foreordained. I canna help mysel'. Smart Archie wasna th' mon t' tell me wha' thing I shall do."

Duncan was speaking soberly, and Noah was at once aware that the young Scotchman was more or less of a fanatic. Another time he would have laughed at his seriousness, but

the troubles of the present were too keen to permit of any delay.

"Do you know where any of our men are?" he demanded.

"Nay, I canna tell ye, mon."

"What are you doing here?"

"I reck'n 't was foreordained that I was t' wait your coomin'."

"Well, I'm here," said Noah impatiently. "Now what next?"

"I dinna ken," said Duncan helplessly.

"Well, I 'ken'!"

"What will ye do?"

"I 'm going to try to find my way to the army."

"I'll go wi' ye, mon," said Duncan, promptly leaping to the ground.

"To the army?"

"I will that."

"But you'll have to obey there more than you did when Smart Archie ordered you to do certain things."

"Well, if 't is foreordained, then I reck'n I'll be a' right."

"Do you know anything of this road?"

"I canna say that I know a' aboot it, but I —"

Duncan stopped abruptly, as looking up he

saw two men approaching. One was a negro of immense size and his companion was an Indian. Instantly Duncan fled into the woods near by, not once glancing behind him in his flight, nor was he aware that Noah was running toward the approaching men.

CHAPTER XI

THE RETURN OF THE VIDETTES

The negro and his companion did not speak until Noah had joined them and eagerly had asked — "Where is Major Gibbs?"

"He's done gone," replied the negro.

"Where?"

"Ah reck'n yo' all nebber will fin' dat place, suh."

"Was he hurt?"

"Who? Majah Gibbs?" The negro displayed his shining teeth in a grin that proclaimed his confidence in his master's ability to defend himself.

"Was his wife harmed by the dragoons?"

"No, suh," said the negro promptly. "De only men what was killed was de one wha' was hanged from de big oak."

"Hanged! What oak? Where is it? Who was the man?"

"Ah don' jes 'member his name. De majah, he done gone ter tak' de mistess ter de Bell place, an' den he sta't fo' de north. He done tell me ter say t' yo' dat Nick an' me

was ter pint de way fo' yo' all ter jine him an' de —"

"Me?" broke in Noah. "He doesn't know me."

"I reck'n da's so, suh, but he done tell me wha' Ah 'm er tellin' yo'! De man wha' was with him —"

"Smart Archie?"

"Ah reck'n da's hit, suh. Ah done hear some one call de gemman by dat name."

"How did he know where I was?"

"He had de repo't, suh. Ah reck'n when Nick an' Samson — da's me, suh — brings him er repo't, Mas' Gibbs done b'lieve hit."

"Did you and Nick tell him I was on the island in the swamp?"

"Ah reck'n he knows all erbout hit, suh," grinned Samson.

"Where am I to go?"

"Ter de place where dis yere Sma't Archie is waitin' fo' yo'."

"Both of you going with me?"

"Ah reck'n we is, suh."

"Then the sooner we start the better."

"Yaas, suh."

"I 'll call Duncan," suggested Noah. "There's another man with me, though I don't know just when he came or how he got here."

"Yaas, suh," assented Samson, apparently unmoved by the information.

In response to Noah's hail, Duncan at last slowly emerged from his shelter in the woods and stood in the road, gazing quietly at the young soldier and his companions. His reluctance to join them was so manifest that at last Noah approached and explained to him who the men were and what they were to do.

"I ha' my suspeecions, mon," said Duncan slowly, although he did not refuse to accompany the young soldier on his way.

"They'll keep," said Noah lightly. "Don't let either of these fellows see that you are afraid of them."

"I'm not afraid, I tell ye. If 't is foreordained that I shall — "

"That's what it is," broke in Noah. "There's no question about it."

Neither the negro nor the Indian spoke when the boys joined them, and without a word they turned into the lane that led back to the spot where the big house recently had stood.

"Where are you going?" said Noah quickly. "I've just come from the major's place."

"Yaas, suh, but dis yere am de c'rect way, suh."

Puzzled by the direction in which Nick and Samson were moving, Noah did not protest, and both he and Duncan followed. When they arrived at the smoking ruins, Samson's manner changed entirely. Leaving his companions near the ruins of the barns, he ran through the orchard and for a time disappeared. In a few moments, however, he returned, and the excitement under which he was laboring was instantly manifest to the waiting men.

"De videttes is comin'! Dey sure is!" he exclaimed.

"Where?"

"Ah reck'n dey is comin' yere."

"Are you sure? They 've got everything of value here. I don't see why they are coming again."

"Dey sure is comin'." repeated Samson.

"How far away are they now?"

"They 'll be yere d'rectly! Dey is on the way beyon' de orchard."

"Then we have n't a minute to lose."

"I reck'n da's so, suh. Yo' go wif Nick ter de swamp an' Ah 'll stay yere ter see wha' Ah c'n do fo' de redcoat sojers."

There was a gleam in the eyes of the huge negro which boded ill for some one.

"I 'll stay with you, Samson," said Noah quietly.

"No, suh! No, suh!"

"Duncan, you go with Nick," said Noah, ignoring the negro's protest. "He 'll take you to a place in the swamp where you 'll be safe; I 've been there myself and I know all about it. Go! go at once!" he added sharply, as the young Scotchman hesitated.

"Na, na. I 'll take no chances," said Duncan.

"Come on, then, I 'll go with you. Samson, you come to the island just as soon as you can," Noah added, turning to the huge black.

"Yaas, suh, Ah 'll be there d'rectly," answered Samson.

"If you need help, can't you call?"

"Yaas, suh. Nick knows all erbout dat."

Instantly Noah and Duncan followed the Cherokee, who swiftly led the way toward the pathway over which the young soldier had recently come. As soon as they had gained the shelter of the great trees, however, Noah stopped and said sharply to Duncan, "You go on with Nick. I 'm going to stay here a little while."

"Then I shall stay, too."

"Go on!" exclaimed Noah threateningly.

"I reck'n I 'll stay th' noo," said Duncan, unmoved.

For an instant Noah was tempted to do more than threaten the obstinate young Scotchman, but his attention at that moment was called to a party of a half-dozen dragoons who were now to be seen riding rapidly toward the place where Samson was to be seen. They, too, had discovered the black man, and their shout as they hailed him was plainly heard by the excited young soldier. Eagerly he watched them as they approached. Samson did not move, and his apparent fearlessness was more than suggestive to the watching young soldier. What was the negro planning? Strong as he was, he was no match for a band of armed and mounted men. Why had the dragoons come back?

As Noah for a moment glanced at his own companions, he was aware that the Cherokee was leaning forward and with shining eyes was looking at the men. Duncan, too, had lost a part of his indifference, and was watching the band as if his belief in "foreordination" for the moment was forgotten.

Noah soon saw that the dragoons were demanding something of the black man which he refused. One of the redcoats threateningly

swung his sword in front of Samson, but the negro did not flinch. The sound of their voices was now more plainly heard, although it was impossible to hear what was said.

At last Samson turned away as if he had no more to say. Would the dragoons let him go? Excitedly Noah watched the redcoats, who at first seemed to be on the point of ordering Samson to come back, but a little later they all dismounted, and apparently paying no attention to the slave began preparations for a meal. Their horses were tied to the near-by trees, and no one was left to guard them. They had brought provisions with them, and soon were so busily engaged in the task of preparing their dinner that all other matters were ignored. Noah watched Samson as the black man strolled carelessly toward the forest, and disappeared from sight at a place about a hundred yards distant from the path where he and his friends were standing.

Turning sharply to Duncan the young soldier said: "Will you stay here with Nick while I go a little farther back?"

"I 'll go wi' ye, mon," said Duncan.

"No, no. You stay right here where you are."

"Where might ye be goin'?"

"I'm not just sure. I may have to go to the island. If you will stay here with Nick and watch the dragoons you can help me."

"Ah, well, I'll be stayin'," drawled Duncan.

Instantly Noah turned and ran swiftly along the pathway that led into the swamp. He was watching the adjacent woods as he ran, nor had he gone far before he saw Samson approaching.

"I thought you would come," exclaimed Noah in a low voice. "What did the dragoons want of you?"

"Dey ask whar Majah Gibbs am."

"If they don't know — he must have escaped."

"He sholy did, suh," grinned Samson.

"Why did they come back to the plantation? Did they think the major would be there now?"

"Yaas, suh. Dey said as how he mought be hidin' somewhar."

"Did n't they threaten you?"

"No, suh."

"Where are you going now? To the hut?"

"Yaas, suh."

"Is any one there besides Smart Archie? Is George there?"

"Ah dunno, suh. Da 's des wha' Ah wan' t' fin' out."

"If there were only some rifles we 'd soon have these dragoons where we want them!" exclaimed Noah. "I left Nick and Duncan to keep watch of the redcoats. I 'll go with you to the island, and even if there is n't any one there except Smart Archie and George we may be able to try something. Are you good for one of these dragoons, Samson?"

"Yaas, suh."

"Come on, then! You lead the way and make the best time to the island you ever did. I 'll keep up with you."

Noah's promise to "keep up" was put to a severe test when Samson instantly started along the path which led to the island in the swamp. The huge black ran at an incredibly swift pace, leaping lightly over the intervening pools, and when they arrived at the stream that flowed on one side of the place they were seeking he jumped without pausing and landed safely on the opposite bank. Noah followed, but his face was streaming with perspiration when he gained his guide's side.

It was plain, however, that Samson's respect for the young soldier was greatly increased, and he said with a chuckle, "Yo' all is quite peart with yo' feet."

"Come on!" called Noah, as without de-

laying he started quickly toward the hut of logs.

In a brief time the place was gained, and they discovered both Smart Archie and George in front of the cabin, staring with alarm at the approaching men.

"Oh, it 's you, is it?" called Smart Archie, relieved when he saw Noah. "I did n't know but that the dragoons were after us."

"We 're after them," replied Noah. "There are six of them up on the plantation. They think there is n't anybody near. They 've tied their horses close together, and if we can get them —"

"The horses or the men?"

"Horses first — then the men if we can."

"Have you a pistol?"

"No. You 're the only one armed — you and George," Noah added, as he glanced at his friend.

"They are doubtless all armed."

"Yes, but they may have left their pistols in their holsters. The men are eating their dinner by this time. If we can get their horses, we 'll let the men go. We have six men — the same number they have."

Noah explained that Duncan and the Cherokee were watching the dragoons and were

awaiting the coming of their friends at the end of the pathway.

"We'll go back with you, anyway," said Smart Archie quickly. "I don't know that we can do anything, but we can at least try."

When the party of four arrived at the place where Duncan and Nick had been left, they found only the Cherokee there. In response to their hasty queries as to what had become of his recent companion, Nick silently pointed to the dragoons, who now were standing and with shouts of laughter were watching the antics of a man who was leaping or dancing before them. He was singing, too, and the words of his song as he sang them in his loudest tones could be plainly distinguished.

"That's Duncan!" exclaimed Noah, in a low voice as he looked at the dancer.

"That's who it is!" replied Smart Archie, who was as mystified as Noah at the strange spectacle.

CHAPTER XII

THE DANCERS

"He 's singing!" said Noah a moment later, as the watchers heard a strange sound coming from the awkward dancer.

"M-maybe t-that is w-w-what y-you c-call it," stammered George.

"Keep still!" exclaimed Smart Archie sharply, in a low voice. "We 've enough to do without spoiling it all by talking too much."

The voice of the "singer" could be plainly heard, and even the words of his song were familiar to the excited men.

"'T was on a pleasant mountain
The Tory heathens lay,
With a doughty major at their head,
One Ferguson they say.

"Cornwallis had detached him
A-thieving for to go,
And catch the Carolina men
Or bring the rebels low — "

"I 'll sing na more," said Duncan obstinately, as the dragoons broke into shouts of laughter.

"Oh, yes, you will," retorted one of the

redcoats, as he drew his pistol and fired at the ground near the feet of the singer. "Now, keep it up!" he added. "We 'll have both singing and dancing."

Duncan's hesitation instantly vanished, and with a shuffling motion of his ungainly body he tried to keep time with his loud song,—

"Just as the sun was setting
Behind the western hills,
Just then our trusty rifles sent
A dose of leaden pills.

"I cannot tell the number
Of Tories slain that day,
But surely it is certain
That none did run away."

"Extraordinary!" "Great!" "More!" "Hear! Hear!" were among the loud exclamations of delight that arose from the soldiers, who now were almost as red in the face as they were in their uniforms.

"Give us another!" ordered the soldier who before had emphasized his demand by firing at the ground near Duncan's feet.

Instantly the young Scotchman resumed his dance and song: —

"For all that were a-living
Were happy to give up.
So let us make thanksgiving,
And pass the bright tin cup."

"That's 'King's Mountain'!" exclaimed Smart Archie in a whisper to Noah. "I can't stand this much longer. It's too much to ask of one to stand still and hear that song sung like that."

"I agree with George," whispered Noah. "I don't call *that* singing, do you?"

"I'm not going to have it made sport of."

"Neither am I. You go with George over to the other side of the orchard and attract the attention of the dragoons. Try to get them to follow you over there. If they do, the rest of us will get these horses and make for the swamp."

"Good scheme," assented Smart Archie. "George, you and I will make for the other side of the orchard. Samson, you stay here with this man. If you can get even two of the horses it will be a help."

Smart Archie and his friend at once withdrew and soon disappeared among the trees as they started toward the place agreed upon. Meanwhile, although Noah, Samson, and Nick were keenly watching for the appearance of their friends on the border of the orchard, they were not unmindful of what was occurring directly before them.

"Now, give us a song of Camden," ordered the dragoon of Duncan.

"I canna," whimpered the prisoner.

"You can try it."

"I didna heer ony."

"Sing, I tell you!" ordered the soldier, once more discharging his pistol.

There was no delay on Duncan's part, as, instantly resuming his awkward attempts to dance, he began: —

> "Camden, Camden, Camden,
> Camden, Camden, Caamden. —"

His voice had not a trace of music — it was a dreary monotonous sing-song that delighted his hearers more than music would have done. The shouts and laughter broke forth afresh.

"Now, shout 'God save the King!'" ordered the dragoon.

"I willna."

"Oh, yes, you will, my dear!"

"Na, na. Ye ken weel me I'll no do thot —"

"Say it!" commanded the dragoon threateningly.

"I'll no say it."

"Say it!" ordered the soldier. "Say it!" he repeated, as his companions gathered about

him, laughing and interestedly watching the stubborn prisoner.

"Good Lord deliver us!"

"Say what I tell you!" The soldier spoke savagely, and advanced with his pistol raised threateningly upon Duncan.

"Look yonder!" abruptly exclaimed one of the soldiers, pointing, as he spoke, to two men who could be plainly seen on the border of the orchard.

There was a hasty whispered consultation of the redcoats in which Duncan and his antics were forgotten. In a brief time four of the soldiers leaped upon the backs of their horses and started swiftly toward the two men who still were plainly seen in the orchard.

"Now! Now is our chance!" said Noah excitedly to his two companions when the four redcoats had departed.

The attention of the two redcoats who had been left with their prisoner and the two remaining horses was now entirely given to the actions of their companions who were riding swiftly through the orchard. Both men were standing with their backs turned to the woods from which Noah and his two followers were stealthily advancing. As the horses were tied at some little distance from the place where

Duncan and his guards were standing, Noah's plan was to steal upon the horses and secure them if possible without drawing upon them the attention or the fire of the two dragoons.

"Run!" he exclaimed in a low voice, as the three men left the protection of the great trees. "Get the horses! If we can do that, we 'll be ready —"

The young soldier did not complete his explanation, for at that moment his approach was discovered by the dragoons. With a loud shout both started swiftly for their horses. The distance between the horses and both the approaching parties was nearly the same. Which could be the first to gain the spot depended almost entirely upon the swiftness of the runners.

It was speedily manifest that Noah's companions were far more fleet than their enemies, the Cherokee easily outstripping all in the race. Nick quickly freed one of the horses, and leaping upon its back was gone before either Samson or Noah could join him.

A shot from one of the dragoons passed close to Samson's head, and the huge negro with a shout instantly turned and faced the approaching dragoons.

As the other soldier did not fire, Noah was

convinced that neither now had a loaded pistol, and, instantly turning, he ran toward the men, followed closely by Samson.

The sight of the huge negro was of itself terrifying, for the giant plainly was in a savage mood, and both soldiers turning quickly, and with loud calls for help, began to run at their utmost speed toward the orchard where their recent companions had gone in pursuit of the two men that had appeared on its borders.

As Noah looked toward the orchard he saw that the cries for help had been heard and that the four dragoons were already riding swiftly back to the aid of their friends.

Turning an instant he shouted to Duncan, —"Take the horse! Get it and go! Don't stop!"

Without looking to see whether or not his command had been heeded, Noah increased his efforts, and speedily threw himself upon the man before him, who had stumbled and fallen to the ground.

Lifting the man to his feet, he saw at the same time that Samson had seized the man before him, and that, despite his struggles, he had thrown the soldier across his shoulder and already was on his way back to the woods.

"Come! Come with me!" Noah ordered his

prisoner. As the man struggled to free himself and at the same time called in his loudest tones for his friends to help him, the young soldier grasped the trooper by the back of the neck and pushed him in front of him. "Stop that!" he ordered. "If you fight back, it will be the worse for you! That's right," he added, as the man obediently began to move. Without releasing his grasp, Noah pushed and urged his prisoner forward. He saw Samson far in advance. The negro had almost gained the refuge of the woods. Once there the dragoons would no longer be able to pursue on horseback, for the trees were thick and the brush was dense. Only to one familiar with the immediate region could a passage be feasible.

A loud shout and the sound of a shot behind him convinced Noah that his own pursuers were close upon him. He glanced behind him and his fears were confirmed, for the men were riding furiously and now were not more than fifty yards distant. In front were the sheltering woods, not more than fifty feet away. Could he ever gain them?

The shot had not been repeated, and Noah well understood the reason for that — the dragoons were afraid of hitting their companion.

The prisoner was once more striving to draw back. In desperation Noah savagely whispered in his ear, "Stop that!" At the same time his grasp on the man's neck tightened until the soldier gasped and groaned with pain, but his speed was resumed.

Suddenly a shot from the woods rang out and a cry from the pursuers plainly indicated that it had not been fired at random. Without stopping, however, to look behind him, Noah, stumbling, struggling, still pushing the dragoon before him, came within a few feet of the shelter he was seeking.

Suddenly Samson darted from the woods, and leaping toward Noah he seized the prisoner in his arms and ran swiftly back among the trees, the young soldier instantly following.

When the protection of the great trees had once been gained, Noah turned and looked back at the troopers. Their pursuit had been sharply checked, and it was manifest at once that they were uncertain how many men were in the woods before them or whether or not they were about to be attacked. This uncertainty provided the very advantage which Noah was most eager to obtain.

Turning quickly to Samson he inquired, "Where is the horse? Is Duncan with it?"

"Yaas, suh. He done gone er little way back inter de woods."

"You go with them, then. Take this man, and I'll stay here until I find out what these troopers are going to do next."

"Yaas, suh! Yaas, suh!" said Samson hastily, although he did not move from the place where he was standing.

"Go on!" again urged Noah. "You'll have your troubles with two prisoners, a horse, and Duncan. We must save time. Go!"

Samson reluctantly did as he had been told, and soon with the dragoon, who had been disarmed, disappeared among the great trees.

For a time Noah remained on the border of the woods watching the four troopers, who now with their horses had withdrawn to a place where they would be safe from the shots of any men who might be concealed among the trees. There was only a brief delay, however, before Noah saw them ride swiftly into the lane. He watched them until they gained the distant road, and then he hastily turned to seek the path that led to the island in the great swamp. He was uncertain whether the dragoons had gone for reinforcements or had departed, not to return to rescue their comrades. As he followed the path he saw the footprints of the

two horses which had been taken, and was satisfied that Samson had complied with his request. He looked about him for traces of Smart Archie and George, but did not discover either until he arrived at the stream which protected the island.

As he prepared to leap across it, he was startled as he heard the deep laugh of Samson high up in the tree where the negro had been on guard when Noah had first come to the island.

"Dey sho' is gone!" chuckled the negro from his perch.

"I don't know. They went up the lane."

"Yaas, suh. Ah done seen 'em go."

Samson speedily descended and joined Noah on his way to the hut, chuckling and laughing frequently in a manner that betrayed his enjoyment over something which his companion plainly did not comprehend. However, Noah was too deeply engrossed in his own thoughts to give much heed to his companion, and it was not until they came within sight of the cabin that he spoke.

"What's that?" he asked abruptly, as he looked in surprise before him.

"Yaas, suh," laughed the delighted negro. "Da's hit!"

"That's what?"

Before him Noah saw a strange sight. Hatless, coatless, streams of perspiration pouring down his face and apparently almost exhausted, the redcoat who had compelled Duncan to dance and sing was now engaged in a similar performance himself. On the grass in front of the cabin, with Duncan himself standing close by, a long switch raised in his hand, the soldier was leaping and dancing, as if the violence of his efforts was the measure of his strength.

"Faster, mon!" ordered Duncan. "Ye ken weel hoo t' do th' fling. Higher, mon!"

The weary dragoon responded with higher, wilder leaps, and Smart Archie and George, who were interested spectators, clapped their hands as if to encourage him in his redoubled exertions.

CHAPTER XIII

DUNCAN'S REFORMATION

THE young soldier stood and silently watched the antics of the almost exhausted redcoat. The man had plainly been dancing or leaping about on the grass for a considerable time, but Duncan's mercy had not as yet been aroused.

"I reck'n we 'll hear ye sing, th' noo," said the young Scotchman, as Noah joined the little group. "Ye compelled me to sing 'Camden' for ye, an' I 'm thinkin' we 'll all enjoy yer renderin' o' 'King's Mountain.' Begin, mon!"

"I don't know the tune," gasped the soldier.

"There 'll be no stoppin', I 'm thinkin'," said Duncan quickly, as the man's efforts relaxed a moment. "Ye ken weel how I did th' dance for ye. So noo we 'll ha' ye do th' song for us."

"I don't know it," pleaded the man.

"Then I 'll till it t' ye, mon. ''T was on a pleasant mountain,'" began Duncan. "Sing it, mon!" he ordered, as the redcoat hesitated.

"'T was on a pleasant mountain,'" repeated the redcoat in a sing-song tone, as his antics were increased when Duncan lifted the long switch in his hand.

"Very good. 'The Tory heathens lay.'"

"'The Tory heathens lay.'"

"'Wi' a doughty major at their head.'"

"'With a doughty major at their head.'"

"'One Ferguson they say.'"

"'One — Ferguson —' I can't sing any more," gasped the redcoat, as he flung himself on the ground.

"Nay, mon," said the merciless Duncan. "'T is foreordained that ye shall sing 'King's Mountain' an' dance till it, too. Noo then —"

"That's enough, Duncan," spoke up Noah quietly.

"I reck'n I'll ha' a wee bit more," replied Duncan. "I'm no forgettin' th' preevilege this mon gave me, I wouldna deny heem —"

"He's done all he's going to do now."

"That he hasna!" retorted Duncan loudly. Then turning to the prisoner he said sharply, "Stan' up, ye meeserable mon, an' sing —"

"Don't get up!" ordered Noah. "You have done all that is required."

"I'll help ye," said Duncan loudly, as he sprang forward.

Before he was able to lay hands upon the prisoner, however, he was suddenly seized by the shoulders and flung so violently away that he staggered and fell to the ground.

Almost beside himself with rage, the young Scotchman regained his foothold and rushed furiously upon the quiet young soldier.

"Hoot! Didna I tell ye that th' Tory was foreordained t' sing 'King's Mountain'? An' sing it he shall!" Duncan added, his anger aroused still more by the laughter of Smart Archie and George.

"S-s-sing it y-yourself, Duncan," suggested George.

"Nay, I'll ha' this mon sing it wi' th' redcoat," shouted Duncan, as he made a rush upon Noah.

Stepping slightly to one side as his comrade ran upon him, Noah thrust forth his foot and at the same time gave the awkward and angry young Scotchman a push that sent him sprawling face downward upon the ground.

"I'll ha' yer lights, mon!" roared Duncan, as now, furious at his plight and the shout of laughter that had greeted his fall, he arose and started once more for Noah. "Ye'll no interfere wi' me —"

Watching his opportunity, Noah suddenly

seized the angry Duncan by his arms and at the same time tripping him fell upon him on the grass.

"Hoot! Tak' him awa'! Ye'll be breakin' my bones, mon!" roared the fallen patriot, twisting and turning and striving desperately to free himself from the unbroken grasp of his tormentor.

"Will you be good?" asked Noah.

"I'll ha' th' mon sing 'King's Mountain'!"

"Will you be good?" again Noah asked, looking down into the face of Duncan.

"I'll be lettin' heem go wi' one wee bit stanza."

"Will you be good?"

"'T is foreordained that he must sing it," said Duncan, speaking with difficulty. "I couldna —"

"'T is foreordained that you shall not treat a prisoner —"

"But he made me dance —"

"That has n't anything to do with it. Will you leave him alone?"

"I willna!" said Duncan, suddenly exerting all his strength and twisting and squirming in a renewed attempt to free himself.

His efforts, however, were useless, for Noah

Dare, the champion wrestler among Mad Anthony's men, held him as if he had been a child in his grasp.

"I 'll ask you once more if you 'll be good," said the young soldier quietly.

Duncan did not reply, though the expression of his face plainly indicated that he had no thought of abandoning his purpose.

"I shall have to cool you off, I'm afraid," said Noah abruptly, as by a quick movement he drew Duncan backward and then lifting him from the ground threw the young Scotchman, still struggling and calling for aid, across his shoulder. Amazed as the spectators were at the unexpected exhibition of strength, they were all laughing as they followed Noah, who was carrying his burden toward the stream.

When he arrived on the bank he halted and sharply inquired: —

"Is it still foreordained, Duncan?"

There was no reply to his question, and Noah abruptly seized his prisoner by the feet and dragged him to the water.

"Any change in your plan by this time?" he asked quietly.

"Nay! I 'll ha' ye —"

"That will do!" interrupted Noah sharply.

"Now, then, in you go!" he added, as he suddenly swung his helpless prisoner about until his head and shoulders were under the water. He instantly drew the sputtering, gasping Duncan to the bank and inquired, "Is that enough?"

But Duncan's anger was not yet cooled, and Noah quickly submerged once more the sputtering young Scotchman.

"How is it now, Duncan?" inquired Noah, as he again hastily drew his victim to the bank. "Have you changed your mind?"

"Help me!" called Duncan. "Will ye all stan' like cattle an' never move a finger t' save me from —"

"I 'm afraid you 'll have to try it again," broke in Noah.

"Nay, mon! I tell ye I ha' had a plenty!" roared Duncan.

"Will you be good now?"

"I'll no touch th' mon."

"Are you sure?"

"I am," responded Duncan promptly.

"Is it foreordained that you 'll keep your hands off the prisoner?"

"I canna say thot exac'ly —"

"Then I 'll have to help you," broke in Noah.

"Nay! I'll no say a word!" whimpered Duncan.

"Then get up!"

As he spoke Noah abruptly lifted the prostrate young Scotchman to his feet, and smiled as he looked into his stained and flushed face.

"After this, remember that a prisoner is not to be treated as you were doing."

"But, mon, he made me sing 'King's Mountain!'" protested Duncan.

"Well, you 're even with him," said Noah dryly. "Now come back to the cabin and leave the redcoat alone."

"Mon, ye ha' th' grip o' Bulzebub!" said Duncan, as he looked in wonder at the young soldier. "I canna understand it."

"Y-you w-were d-doing y-your b-b-best," suggested George.

"I wasna more than a rabbit in th' jaws o' a houn' dog," replied Duncan, solemnly shaking his head as he spoke. "I canna understand it."

"Y-you t-take m-my w-word f-f-for it and d-don't t-t-try to f-find out a-any m-m-more," suggested George quietly.

As the party now retraced its way to the cabin, Noah joined Smart Archie and asked, "What became of Major Gibbs?"

"He and his men got away."

"Did Mrs. Gibbs go with them?"

"I think so. The major told me to come to the island, and if he did n't come within a day or two I would know that we were not to wait for him any longer. I stayed near the big house until the dragoons set it on fire. I 'd like to know how many places they have burned!" he added angrily.

"It would n't do you any good if you did know. You will stay here on the island until you hear from the major?"

"I 'll stay awhile."

"Are he and his men going to join the army?"

"Yes. They were waiting for some others and then they were all going together."

"To the army of the Marquis?"

"Yes. There are horrible reports he tells me. Almost every place along the James River has been raided and burned. Benedict Arnold did the worst — at least he did n't have any mercy on the patriots."

"The villain!" muttered Noah.

"He 's worse than that! He 's gone now."

"Where?"

"I don't just know. The major said there was a report that the traitor was going to take

his force into Connecticut — that's his old home, you know. It does n't seem possible that a man could want to treat his own neighbors as he will do if he gets a chance. At least, that's what he has been doing in Virginia — just burning and pillaging everywhere he went."

"I think I 'll take one of these horses and start to-morrow morning. I have been too long on the way already."

"You have n't been idle, though. What we've seen here has only been one of a thousand sights just like it. The redcoats thought after their plan to split the eastern colonies failed that they could come down here, and if they did enough they 'd bring the men from Virginia and the Carolinas back home to protect their families. It has worked just the other way, though. I have never, since the war began, seen our men so determined as they are now. And the women are more in earnest than the men."

"You don't mind if I take one of these horses?"

"No. You 're welcome to it as far as I am concerned. Don't you want George or Nick to go with you? Nick knows every foot of the ground all the way to the James."

"He has n't any horse."

"No. I don't want him to take the other horse — I may need that. But you 'll be better off to go with Nick and not take a horse than you will to go alone even on horseback. You don't know the country, do you?"

"I never was here before."

"You'll have your troubles. As one goes farther on they get worse and worse, too. The Tories are everywhere, and doing everything in their power to draw our men away from the army. That seems to be the plan the redcoats are working upon — to make so much trouble everywhere that the Marquis or Mad Anthony won't be able to hold their men together. You 'd better stay here with us and wait for Major Gibbs to come."

"But he may not come."

"That's true. We shall know in a day or two. Even if he and his men don't come, you 'll be better off if you stick to us."

"No; I can't wait any longer. I 'll stay to-night, and make up my mind whether I 'd better go alone on horseback or leave the horse and take Nick with me."

Early the following morning, Noah departed from the island in the swamp. He was alone, having decided that the possession of a horse

would be of greater service than even to have the Cherokee as a guide. To his surprise Duncan begged that he might go with the young soldier, but Noah explained that it would be impossible to keep together if one was mounted and the other not. He was hopeful, however, that soon all the little band would be together again, for even Nick and Samson were to accompany the men on their way to the patriot army in the north.

When Noah left the path in the swamp and turned into the lane that led to the road he was keenly watching, not knowing whether or not the dragoons who had been seen the preceding day were still in the vicinity. But not a man was seen on the plantation. Faint little traces of smoke were still in evidence among the ruins of the buildings, and the scene of desolation only served to increase the feeling of desolation in his heart. Would the struggle never come to an end? Six years had passed since the revolution had begun and apparently no end was in sight. Grimly he turned his horse into the road, and maintaining a careful watch started swiftly on his way. The directions which Smart Archie had given him were somewhat vague, and yet his hopes were high.

Suddenly as he glanced down at his saddle he was aware that the coat he was wearing was not his own. For a moment he was puzzled by his discovery, and then he recalled the exchange he had made. In his excitement he had failed to replace the one he had been wearing. He thrust his hand into one of the pockets and drew out a paper. As he glanced at it carelessly he was about to restore it to its place, when he was startled by what he read. In a moment his excitement increased, and he was speeding over the road as swiftly as his horse could carry him.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DEMAND OF TWO TORIES

The young rider had not gone far on his way, after he had read the startling words on the paper which he had found in his pocket, before he was aware that the strength of his horse was failing. The poor beast was laboring hard, its sides were wet with sweat and every breath was drawn with an effort. Night, too, was coming on, and, ignorant of his way, Noah glanced anxiously about him for some place of refuge. His own desire, as well as the word which the paper in his pocket had given, urged him to hasten, but the thought of losing his way was a source of anxiety that was not to be ignored.

The rough roadway he had been following showed that it had not been traveled much of late, and the clearings he had passed were scattered and far from being numerous. At this moment, however, the young soldier entered a region where apparently fire had aided the axe, for the immediate vicinity was bare of green trees. Blackened stumps were to be seen

on all sides, and in the gathering gloom they stood like dusky sentinels all about him. Not far in advance he saw a little cabin, and near it were a few small and scattered buildings of logs. He noticed the little barn, the corn-crib that stood near the house, and a pen in which some hogs were confined; but what at once drew his attention more than any of these things was the curling smoke that was rising from the rude little chimney of the house. Some one was living in the place, and, as soon as he was aware of the fact, Noah looked carefully to the priming of the pistol he had secured before he departed from the island. Whether friends or foes were within the cabin he had no means of knowing. His own feeling of hunger, as well as the condition of his horse, required that something be done, and he speedily decided to stop and at least make some inquiries. He rode up to the front of the little cabin and announced his arrival by a hail.

The door of the house instantly was opened and a woman approached, looking anxiously into the face of her visitor as she drew near.

Apparently relieved by the fact that her visitor was alone, she inquired in a low voice, "What do you want?"

"Can I have my horse fed?" asked Noah.

"I have some corn; that's all."

"That will do very well, thank you," said Noah, smiling as he spoke, though he did not dismount. "Are you alone?"

"Just now I am, sir," answered the woman, apparently without fear.

"You need have no fear of me."

"I am not afraid."

"Have you seen any men pass recently?"

"Tories?"

"Yes," replied Noah quickly, aware from the word which the woman had used that her sympathies were with the patriots, for "Tory" was never used by the royalists to describe their own party.

"No."

"That's good. I don't love them any more than you do."

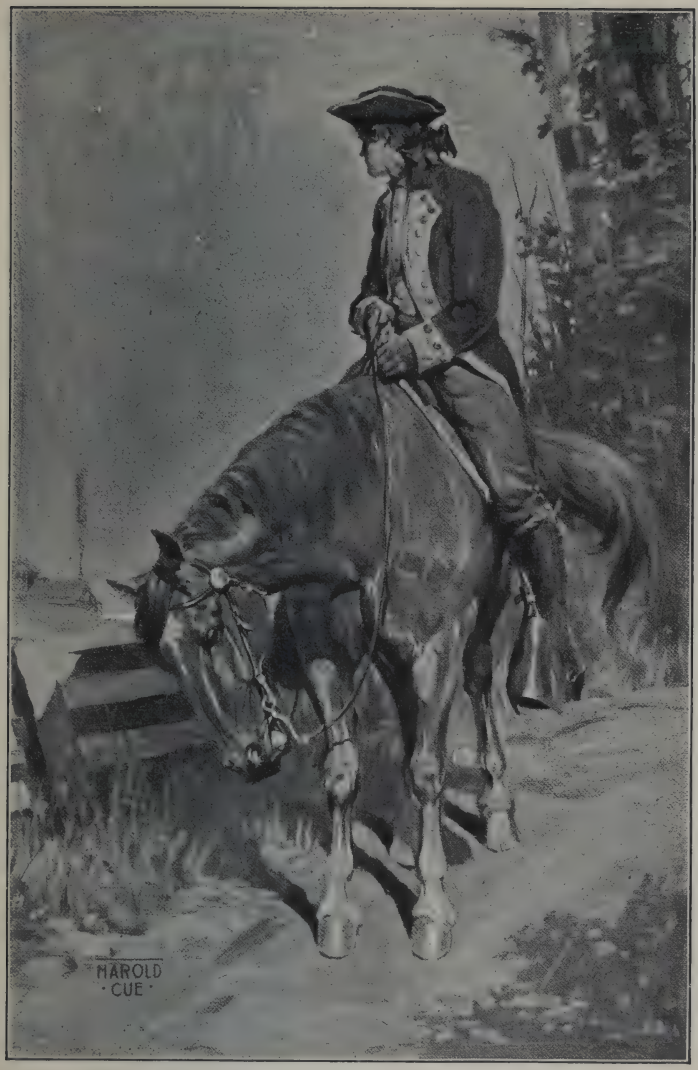
"Who are you?"

"I am a Continental, though I'm a long way from my regiment."

"How is that?"

"If you are willing for me to feed my horse — and perhaps let me have a bite, too — I shall be glad to tell you all about it."

"I haven't much to eat, but I'll serve you with the best I have," replied the woman



SOME ONE WAS LIVING IN THE PLACE

quietly. "No friend of the colonies shall be turned away hungry from my door as long as there is a bite in my house."

"Thank you," said Noah, as he dismounted. "I have found a good many like you since I came south."

"My husband and I came here from Pennsylvania—"

"My home is in New Jersey, not far from the Pennsylvania line."

"Then you are twice welcome. Put your horse in the barn. You 'll find a black mare in there already, but there 's room for your horse, too."

Noah quickly led his wearied horse to the little barn, where he fed it from a pile of corn that stood near. When he went to the house he found the woman already busied in preparing a supper, though she smiled as the young soldier entered.

"We have to feed our horse on corn and we don't get anything better ourselves. I 've had to hoe the field myself since my husband has gone to the army," she said.

"It must be hard for you — and lonely."

"I 'm not afraid when I 'm alone — it 's when I 'm not alone that I am scared."

"Do you have visitors?"

"Yes — but not so many. I 'm all the time afraid some will come. I have something to use if the Tories or redcoats should be too troublesome." As she spoke the woman nodded significantly at two rifles that were hanging on pegs in the wall.

"I am sure you can take care of yourself."

"I am not 'sure,' though I am not afraid to try."

As the simple meal which she had prepared was now ready, she bade her guest seat himself, and while she attended to his wants she had many questions to ask, some of which Noah readily answered and others he did not reply to directly. The woman's patriotism was manifestly strong, but the thought of the paper in his pocket made the young soldier somewhat cautious.

He did not hesitate, however, to accept the urgent invitation which his hostess gave him to remain until morning. It was a novelty to sleep once more in a bed. It is true the house contained but two rooms, — a loft which the woman claimed for herself and the lower room which served as kitchen, bedroom, and parlor in one.

It was daylight when Noah awoke at the call of his hostess, who had descended by

means of a small ladder on the outside of the house. In a brief time Noah was dressed, delaying only to read once more the strange word he had found on the paper in the pocket of his coat, and as he slipped outside and greeted his hostess he was aware that the day promised to be fair and warm. He went to the barn to attend to the wants of the two horses, and as he returned to the house he was startled when he saw his hostess standing in the doorway beckoning frantically for him to hasten.

Instantly complying with the unspoken request, he speedily entered and said, "What is wrong?"

"Look up the road," said the woman quickly, moving to the opposite side of the room and pointing to some men in the distance.

"Are they coming here?" asked Noah.

"I don't know. I think they 'll stop here."

"There are only two," suggested the young soldier.

"You mean you can see only two. One never knows. There may be a dozen or more following."

"What will you do if they stop?"

"I can take care of myself," said the woman resolutely. "It 's for you I am afraid."

"Are these men Tories?"

"I don't know. They may be. It 's too late for you to get away. You must hide."

"And leave you alone to face these Tories — if they are Tories?"

"Yes! Yes! And you must be quick."

"I don't want —"

"Never mind that! The men are coming. I'll be safer without you than I shall be if these men know you are here."

"What can I do?"

"Hide! Hide!"

"Where?"

"In here!" said the woman frantically, as she indicated the foot of the bed in which Noah had slept. "Here! This is the best place! Crawl into the bed and I'll cover you with the quilts. Do it! Be quick! I'll let you know if I need your help! Don't wait a minute! Get right in! The men are almost here! They are Tories — the most bitter of all the men I know anywhere! The cowards — to come here when my husband and his brother are gone! I expect them back any time now. But you must n't wait! There!" she added, as Noah quickly responded to her appeal by taking the place on the bed she indicated.

In a moment she had thrown the quilts

back over him and turned to face the men who were already at the door.

"Where is your husband?" demanded one of the men.

"I expect him back any time. Do you want to see him?"

"I reck'n it 'll be a right sma't time before Jim Bell comes back," said the man, as he laughed brutally.

"Will you come in and wait?"

"I reck'n we might step inside. I want to ask a question."

"Come in."

The men entered the room and seated themselves on a bench at the side of the fireplace. They were both insolent in their manner and apparently without fear of the return of the woman's husband.

"What do you want to ask me?" inquired Mrs. Bell quietly.

"I reck'n it is n't necessary to beat 'bout the bush. We want the money you 've got."

"I have n't a coin in the house."

"That sounds mighty pretty," laughed the man who had spoken before. "I reck'n we 'll help you find some."

Noah was able to hear all that was said, but he was lying motionless in his hiding-place.

His anger was rising at the insolence of the men, but he was waiting for the need of his aid to become more manifest before he made himself known.

"You 'll excuse me if I go on with my morning's work," said Mrs. Bell quietly.

"Oh, don't mind us. We 'll sit here an' rest a bit while we think over what we c'n do to help yo' get that money."

Mrs. Bell did not reply, and taking her broom began to sweep as if she were not aware of the presence of the men. In a moment there was a cloud of dust, and, strange to say, it was directed toward the place where the two men were seated.

"Here! This is too much!" exclaimed one of the visitors as he arose, and sneezing violently made for the door. "Come on!" he called to his companion. "The woman can't get away, an' maybe she 'll think of the place where the coin is hid. We 'll take a look at the barn an' see what we can find there."

As the man's companion followed him, Noah was seized with an almost uncontrollable desire to sneeze, for the dust which Mrs. Bell had stirred up had penetrated beneath his covering. Noah stuffed the quilts into his mouth and bit his lip, but at last a prolonged

though muffled blast was heard from the bed. For a moment Noah was tempted to throw back the coverings and prepare to defend himself, for he had no doubt that he had been heard by the men.

Before he moved, however, the woman approached and said with a laugh, "Don't do that again."

"Where are the Tories?" asked Noah quickly.

"Gone to the barn. There, they're coming out now and they have both the horses with them!" she added angrily.

"They can't have them," said Noah, leaping out of the bed. "Let me take a rifle and I'll soon send them about their business! The rascals —"

"No, not yet. I don't want to harm them unless it's necessary. I know them, and if anything serious happens it will be the worse for me. They have tied the horses to the tree near the corn-crib," she added, as she once more slipped to the door and looked at the marauders. "They are crawling into the corn-crib!" she added in her excitement. "They're both inside the crib."

Noah advanced cautiously and peered over the woman's shoulder. The corn-crib was an

oblong structure made of small logs, and was not more than thirty feet from the house. It was a rude little building about six feet in width and seven feet high. In front there was a small opening which could be shut off by a slide. This opening was about eighteen inches square, just large enough to permit a bag filled with corn to be drawn through it. Through this opening both men had now crawled, and were busily engaged in filling bags with the small amount of corn that was still left in the crib.

"Don't show yourself!" said Mrs. Bell hastily, as she seized a stick of hickory that was standing near the fireplace. This stick had been blocked out for an axe-handle and had been left near the fireplace to season. "I 'll take this cudgel and teach Sam Fisher and Toby Swan not to come near my place very soon again!" said the woman, as she concealed her cudgel beneath her apron and started directly toward the corn-crib. "Don't let any one see you," she again warned Noah. "If it is necessary, I 'll call you, but it will be better for all if it is not known that you are here."

Noah reluctantly obeyed. Standing near the doorway he watched the intrepid woman as

she advanced upon the enemy. Just as she drew near the crib he saw that one of the men was trying to crawl backward out of the opening. And instantly Mrs. Bell began her attack.

CHAPTER XV

A HICKORY CUDGEL.

As the blow from the axe-helve fell upon the body of the man, he emitted a loud shout of anger and pain and instantly tried to crawl back into the crib.

"O-oh!" he roared. "What d'ye mean? Ouch! That hurts!" he cried again, as another blow fell upon him. Still another blow descended before the man managed to gain a refuge within the corn-crib.

Furious with rage, both men stood and shouted at their captor though she was standing not more than four feet away.

"What d'ye mean?" again demanded the one who had been the victim of her assault. "What d'ye mean, I say?" he shouted again.

"I mean to have you leave my corn where you found it."

"It will be the worse for you!"

"Not while I have this hickory cudgel," calmly retorted the woman.

"Leave us alone! Let us out!"

"Then leave my corn where it belongs."

"You'll suffer for this!"

"I shan't cry if I do. I'll leave that for Tories!" retorted the woman.

There was a silence for a moment, and Noah was certain that the two prisoners were consulting together. The woman stood unmoved before the exit of the corn-crib, the hickory stick still held in her hand. If she was frightened, there was nothing in her manner to betray her fear, for she did not move from the place where she had taken her stand. The sight was so ludicrous that Noah laughed silently as he awaited the developments, for he well knew the present condition would not long continue.

Both the prisoners had left their weapons outside when they had crawled into the crib, doubtless because neither believed he would have any use for them while he was securing the corn. Noah, in spite of his enjoyment of the Tories' predicament, was prepared at any moment to go to the rescue of the bold woman if she should be in any peril.

The moments slowly passed and the silence was unbroken until one of the men called again, "Are you going to let us out?"

"That depends."

"On what?"

"What you try to do."

"What do you want us to do?"

"Leave."

"We 'll go."

"Without making any trouble?"

"Yes."

"I'm not sure of either one of you. If you leave, you'll have to do it as I say," the woman suggested.

"What do you want?"

"I want you both to agree to stay right where you are until I put both these horses in the barn."

"We'll agree to that," said one of the men quickly.

"All right," responded the woman quietly. She rolled her club under her apron and at once turned to the trees to which the two horses had been tied. There was nothing in her manner to indicate that she was suspicious that her prisoners would not abide by their promise, but Noah, as he watched her, was positive that she did not for a moment lose sight of the corn-crib. She moved to the side of the horses which was farther from the place where the prisoners were confined and apparently was busy in freeing the two animals. Suddenly Noah saw that one of the

men was trying to escape. One leg was thrust through the exit and the man was attempting to push his head through the opening. The young soldier was tempted for an instant to call to his hostess or to go to the crib, although he still was desirous of not betraying his presence unless necessity compelled him. In a moment, however, he saw the fearless woman darting to the corn-crib, her hickory cudgel raised above her shoulder. She did not utter a sound, but doubtless her coming was seen by the comrade of the man who was doing his utmost to escape and a warning was given him. Noah's excitement increased as he saw the man redouble his efforts. The running woman was upon the man before his head was through the aperture, and without a word her club descended on the helpless victim.

"O-oh! O-u-ch! Stop! Stop!" begged the squirming Tory, who for a time was not able to move in any direction. "Stop that!" he roared, as the axe-helve fell again and again, and Noah was now aware, as he watched the contest, that the blows were not light ones. "O-oh! Help! Help me! Stop! Please stop! We'll not touch another ear of corn! Oh! You hurt! Stop!" The pleadings and cries of the

twisting man abruptly ceased when at last, by an extreme effort and at the same time being aided by his comrade, he contrived to regain the shelter of the interior of the rude little structure.

"You'll suffer for this!" shouted one of the prisoners. "We'll burn your house! We'll report you to Lord Cornwallis!"

"You'd better wait until he comes to rescue you," replied the woman quietly. "Besides, you will do well to save your breath. You may need it all before Cornwallis comes. Are you expecting him soon?" she added mockingly.

"Let us out and we'll leave the place quietly."

"I had your promise before."

"We'll keep it this time," pleaded the man who before had spoken.

"I reckon you will."

"What do you intend to do with us?"

"I think I'll wait until my husband and his friends come back and leave it to them to decide."

"Let us out! Let us out!" begged the man, plainly alarmed by the threat.

"If you are so anxious, why don't you come?" said the woman mockingly.

"Will you agree not to hit us with that club?"

"I'll not make any rash promise."

"We'll agree not to harm you."

"You certainly won't where you are."

"You surely are not going to keep us here," whined the other prisoner.

"I'm sure I don't want you on the place. I did n't invite you to come."

"No, no, we made a mistake."

"That's so, I reckon. I'll try to take warning and not make any more mistakes myself. I made one when I trusted you."

"This time we'll do what we agree."

"What's that?"

"To leave and not do any damage."

"I reckon you won't do any damage if you stay right where you are."

"Won't you please let us out?"

"Yes — on three conditions."

"What are they? We'll agree."

"The first is that you stay in the crib while I go into the house. You are n't to try to get out — either one of you."

"We'll promise. What else do you want us to do?"

"I'll wait and see how you live up to the first before I ask anything more. You'll

agree to stay in the crib while I go to the house?"

"Yes, yes," said both men eagerly.

"Very well, see that you keep your word," said the woman sharply, as she dropped her club and instantly turning ran toward the house. She did not stop nor look behind her on her way, and soon darting into the building she hastily grasped the gun which Noah extended to her, for the young soldier already had divined her purpose in coming.

"Shan't I go with you?" he inquired quickly.

"No. Stay here unless I call to you," replied the woman, as without pausing she instantly departed, running swiftly back to the corn-crib.

As she drew near she saw that one of the prisoners was doing his utmost to escape. The opening in the crib was so small, however, that it was not easy for any one to crawl through it even when he was not attempting to do so hastily, and in this case the very eagerness of the man to gain the ground before his captor returned added to his confusion. As the woman again stood by the aperture, the prisoner was in almost the same position which his comrade previously had occupied in his attempt to escape.

Dropping her gun and once more seizing the hickory cudgel, the woman began to apply it so vigorously that the helpless man roared with pain.

"I — I was just coming to help you!" he pleaded. "Oh! Ouch! Stop that, I say! Oh, please don't! You'll break my leg! Let me go! You're killing me!" His voice rose to a whining cry, but the woman's efforts were not relaxed until at last the man was roughly dragged by his friend within the shelter of the corn-crib.

"You did well!" said the woman scornfully. "The word of a Tory is valuable — just how valuable I now understand. I shall have to explain to my husband how you kept your word."

Neither of the men replied to her taunts, and the woman said, "Now that I have tried you on one promise, I shall not take your word for anything. I am determined that you shall leave this place at once."

"That is just what we want to do," said one of the men eagerly.

"Very well; then you shall have your desire. One of you crawl out."

"Won't you hit us with that club?"

"Not if you do what I say. I'll put my axe-helve on the ground," she added, as she

dropped the cudgel and took up the rifle. "Now then, come out — one of you. I give you my word not to harm you if you don't try to disobey me. One of you come out!"

There was a brief delay and a whispered conversation between the two men, and then one of them said, "I'm coming. You agree not to hit me?"

The woman made no reply as she watched the man slowly try to crawl through the exit. His breathing was labored and there was many an exclamation before at last he succeeded and stood on the ground.

"Now, go get your horse and leave!" said the woman sharply. "Take the road to the left and don't look behind you or Lot's wife will be something you will think is a — Here!" she broke in abruptly, as the leg of the second man appeared in the aperture. "Get right back into that corn-crib!"

"Are you not going to let us both go?" inquired the man who was standing near her.

"Yes, but not at the same time, nor are you both going in the same direction. Get back!" she added curtly, speaking to the man in the crib. Her word was obeyed so hastily that Noah laughed aloud.

"Now, you may have your horse, but you

are not to take your pistols," said the woman to the man before her. "I 'll keep those, if you please. The sooner you start, the sooner your friend can come out. I shall wait until you are out of sight down the road before I let him set a foot on the ground."

The Tory hesitated a moment only, and then, with an exclamation of anger, he turned away, sought his own horse, and quickly mounting sped into the road, being mindful, however, to turn to his left as the woman had bidden him.

When at last the horseman disappeared from sight, the woman said sharply to the remaining prisoner, "It's your turn now. Come out of that crib."

With many groanings and exclamations of disgust the man came out and stood before his captor. "You 'll pay dearly for all this!" he shouted.

"'Threatened people live long'! You 'll start at once! Take your horse and turn to the right. If you chance to meet my husband on the way, you may say to him that I am well and everything on the place is safe."

A sudden turning of the Tory brought him face to face with the woman, but the sight of the gun in her hands checked any inclination

he might have felt to do her harm, and with an exclamation of rage he sullenly seized his horse. Instead of turning to the right, however, when he entered the road, he turned sharply to the left, and urging his horse to his swiftest paces he sped away in the same direction in which his companion had gone and in a brief time he, too, disappeared.

"That was one of the bravest deeds I ever saw!" exclaimed Noah, when his hostess entered the house. "How white you are!" he suddenly added, as he saw that her face was colorless. "You ought to have let me help you."

"And thereby added to my troubles? I did not need you, but I shall be glad when Tom comes back — Look yonder!" she broke in abruptly, as she pointed in excitement to a band of horsemen approaching from the opposite direction to that which the two Tories had taken. "They are coming in here," she added. "You must hide again!"

"I'll go to the barn," suggested Noah, as he at once moved toward the door.

"No! No! You'll be seen. The men may not stop here long. Hide under the bedclothes just as you did before. Be quick! These men are in haste if one can judge from the pace at which they are riding."

Noah looked quickly again at the band, and instantly was aware of the truth of what the woman had said. There were twenty-seven men whom he counted, all mounted and all in uniform. It was impossible to determine to which side they belonged, and there was no opportunity for him to escape from the house without being seen by the approaching men. Quickly he took his place at the foot of the bed, and the woman had barely time to throw the bedclothes over him before a loud hail was heard, and a moment later three men noisily entered the room.

CHAPTER XVI

A STARTLING VISIT

"You are a good friend of the cause, are you not?" asked one of the men, when all three faced the woman in the room.

"I am — if it is the right cause," she replied quietly.

"That is what we have heard, and that is why we have come. We are some of the true friends of the colonies."

The woman did not reply to the suggestion, nor did she turn her face away from the speaker. Whether or not she was aware of the smile with which the soldier's companions greeted his words he did not know.

"It is because we know that you are willing to do all in your power for the cause that we have stopped here this afternoon and may have to trespass on your little place for two or three days," resumed the man who had spoken before. "I am sure, in your loyalty, you will be pleased to have us do this."

"Pray, who are my uninvited guests?"

"Surely you recognize this man," said the

soldier, bowing, as he spoke, to a man that was standing beside him.

"No, sir, I cannot say that I do."

"That is very strange, madam. Have you never heard of Colonel William Washington? I am positive you must know —"

"Who is it?" interrupted the woman.

"I referred to Colonel Washington, the well-known patriot leader."

"Is that man Colonel William Washington?"

"Do you not recognize him?" laughed the soldier.

"I have seen the colonel — and heard much more of him."

"You will of course be pleased, then, to have him and his men tarry here for a time."

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to have the colonel's troops use our home as long as they might wish."

"Then we are at liberty to use the house?"

"I did not say that," said the woman quietly.

"Pardon me, but that is just what I understood you to say."

"I said I would be pleased to have Colonel Washington here."

"Is not this the colonel?" demanded the

officer, rebuking his companions by a look for the smile of amusement which again appeared on their faces.

"No, sir."

"What makes you say that?"

"Because it is true."

"You say you have seen the reb — you have seen Colonel Washington?" the soldier hastily corrected himself, whereat the smile on the faces of the other men deepened.

"Once."

"Then you must recognize this man."

"I do."

"Who is he?"

"Lord Cornwallis."

So startled was Noah by the declaration that it was only with difficulty that he resisted the impulse to throw back the bedclothes and try to escape from the building. The silence that followed the woman's words was ominous. Noah was listening intently, but he was unable to learn the effect of the simple assertion upon the three soldiers.

At last, with a forced laugh, the soldier who before had been the spokesman said, "This gentleman certainly ought to feel highly honored. Have you ever seen the British commander?"

"Never."

"Then why do you think this man is Lord Cornwallis?"

"Because he has a squint in his left eye, is short and fat, and is said to resemble, a little, Colonel William Washington. As I have seen the colonel once, I can see a slight resemblance. His uniform, too, is not like the one our colonel wore when I met him."

"Well, madam, I don't mind informing you that I am Lord Cornwallis," said the man to whom reference had been made and who had not taken any part in the interview. "Now that your woman's wit has led you to the fact, do you object to my men making use of your house for a day or two?"

"It won't do me any good to object."

"That is another stroke of wit," brutally laughed the soldier who before had spoken.

"It requires little wit to know what the redcoats do when they find our women unprotected in their homes."

"We shall do you no harm — personally," hastily said the officer whom she had declared to be Lord Cornwallis. "I assure you, madam, if any of my men were to attempt to — "

"I hear that is what you usually say," interrupted the woman boldly. "But events do

not warrant placing much confidence in your promises."

"I assure you, madam — "

"You cannot 'assure' me. My friends have told me of their experiences. If you would do as I wish, if you had any regard for my feelings, you would not delay here. That, however, is more than I can expect — "

"And a good deal more than you or any other rebel woman deserves!" broke in the soldier loudly. "This place we must use, and any objection on your part will only add to your troubles."

"So I fancy."

"You must get out of the house!" ordered the soldier brutally.

"I understand."

"And you must stay on the place as long as we remain."

"Why do you ask that?" inquired the woman, her voice trembling in spite of her efforts at self-control.

"His lordship has acknowledged his identity — just why, I do not know. But as he has done so, we cannot permit any one to carry such information to any of the skulking rebels. You will stay on the place."

"Where?"

"Where you please. My advice is that you do not stay in the house —"

"I should not do that under any considerations. I have only one request to make."

"What's that?" demanded the soldier roughly.

"That you will all withdraw from the house while I gather a few of my possessions to take with me."

"You are not to leave."

"I do not intend to leave the place — only the house. I shall make my quarters in the smokehouse or in the barn."

"We shall want the barn."

"Then I shall take my gun and a few things and go to the smokehouse and stay there until you are gone."

"You must not take a gun —" began the soldier.

"Let the woman have her musket," broke in the commander.

"Thank you," said the woman quickly. "Now if you will withdraw I shall not require more than five minutes."

Somewhat reluctantly the men departed from the room. As soon as they were gone the woman flung back the quilts which covered Noah, and as the young soldier slipped

hastily to the floor she said, "What will you do?"

"Defend myself as long as I am able," replied Noah, his face colorless, although his voice did not tremble as he spoke.

"No! No! That is madness! It will never do! You must not!"

"There is nothing else to be done."

"You can surrender — give yourself up."

"When I have to."

"There are twenty or more of the men."

"Yes."

"You are alone."

"Yes."

"Here!" exclaimed the woman, as she darted to one side of the room and seized a gown that was hanging from a peg in the wall. "Put this on you! Do as I say!" she added in her excitement. "You are short. It may help you to get away. Put it on you! Don't wait! Here, I'll help you! It will be dark soon. They may think that there are two of us. Don't wait! Put it on you!"

Carried away by the woman's eagerness, Noah hastily donned the dress. As soon as this had been done, she thrust a musket into his hands and handed him a pouch of bullets and a powder-horn. "Hide these in your

dress. Go out the back door and start for the barn. Either hide there, or if you can creep out the back window make for the woods."

"And where will you go?"

"To the smokehouse. Be quick! You go first! I'll wait till you are almost there before I start. Even if they stop me, they'll know who I am. It will give you a chance anyway. Now, go!" she added frantically, as she placed a large sunbonnet on the head of the young soldier.

Noah stepped out of the house, and as he turned the corner one glance at the body of troops was sufficient to convince him of his peril. The men were all mounted and in uniform. Was the leader the commander of the King's troops in the south? As far as appearances went he might be, and as Noah recalled the words he had heard in the house he was confident that Lord Cornwallis himself was indeed here. What had brought the famous general to the spot or what his plan in coming was, he had no means of knowing. His own danger, however, was so great that he immediately gave all his attention to the task of gaining the refuge of the barn without arousing the suspicions of the redcoats.

The young soldier moved slowly, fearful

that any undue haste would bring the band about him. He tried to bring his shoulders into a position in which their breadth would not be too manifest. He walked with short steps; and though he was tempted to look behind him at the redcoats he held back the impulse and kept slowly on his way. His gun was held so tightly that his hands were almost as rigid as the stock. He was breathing rapidly and every muscle was tense. The feeling that the eyes of the soldiers as well as those of the woman who had befriended him were upon him was so intense that several times it seemed to him as if some one was pursuing him.

Every step now brought him nearer the goal he was seeking, and as the open door of the barn was only a few yards distant he quickened his pace. He was about to dart into the building when he was arrested by a shout from the men. Turning quickly about he saw that the woman had started from the house and now was following him on her way to the smoke-house, which stood at a spot about two thirds of the distance between the house and the barn. Her appearance had instantly aroused the redcoats, who doubtless had been waiting for her according to their promise. The sight of a second woman undoubtedly had aroused

their suspicions, and they were about to investigate. Aware that the peril of his hostess who so unselfishly had befriended him was now not less than his own, Noah stepped inside the barn door and excitedly watched the men, three of whom quickly stopped and surrounded the woman.

In a brief time the interview ended, and one of the men that had stopped her advanced toward the barn. Noah saw that his friend, however, was permitted to proceed toward the smokehouse without further trouble. Doubtless, he thought, she had been recognized, and also had given some ready explanation for his own appearance upon the scene, for her wits were quick and keen. There was no escape from the fact, however, that one of the officers was coming to the barn, and the young soldier smiled grimly as he thought of the purpose of the man. If the officer wanted to ascertain who the first "woman" was, Noah smiled as he grimly thought how much assistance he might give in the investigation. His own danger, as well as the peril of the woman, would not permit him to indulge in any tricks, he concluded, and he decided to await the coming of the man outside the barn.

Accordingly Noah, first placing his gun on

the floor, advanced a few steps and, standing in such a way that his face was only to be seen in part, stopped and looked at the approaching soldier. The man was tall but manifestly not muscular. His appearance indicated unusual care in his dress, and his air of confidence made the waiting Noah smile somewhat grimly as he watched the redcoat.

"Who are you? We did n't know there were two women on the place," said the officer as he drew near. "You 'll have to come with me and explain yourself."

"I don't want to," whined Noah, doing his best to conceal his voice.

"Come along!" said the man roughly, as he seized the arm of the "woman."

"I shan't! I don't want to," again said Noah shrilly. He saw that the band of soldiers was standing before the door of the house, and that some of them were watching him and his interviewer.

"Come!" repeated the redcoat, still more roughly.

"Can't ye let me be?" whined Noah.

Then suddenly seizing the man by the shoulders he tripped him and flung him hard upon the ground. As the soldier leaped to his feet and, angered by the derisive calls

of his friends, started swiftly for Noah, he was again seized by the shoulders, spun round and once more tripped. Furiously angry now, the soldier again ran to the "woman," and this time he was seized and tightly held for a moment. Then he was turned about and with a kick was thrown face downward upon the ground.

CHAPTER XVII

A SCHEME

A LOUD shout from the soldiers standing near the house caused Noah to look hastily at the men. They were laughing and manifestly enjoying the overthrow of their comrade, who had been treated so roughly by the "woman" whom he had attempted to intimidate. As yet no one had started to aid the fallen man. Their taunts and cries of derision were simply evidences of their enjoyment of the scene.

The man whom Noah had treated as if he were a child in his hands now arose, and somewhat dazed by his fall stood a moment as if he was uncertain what to do next. The call of his comrades, however, served to recall the possibility of aid, and without looking again at the young soldier he turned back and started toward the house. His coming was the signal for another chorus of jeers and laughs, but the crestfallen man at once entered the building and in a brief time was followed by others.

Relieved by the sight, which seemed to im-

ply that for the moment at least he was in no danger, Noah at once entered the barn. He remained near the door where he could maintain a watch on the house, but when a half-hour had elapsed and no one came to the barn, he concluded that the crestfallen soldier either had not been able to induce his comrades to assist him in punishing the "woman" in the barn or had abandoned the purpose himself. In either event Noah felt safe for the time, and as soon as the first effects of his recent excitement were gone he seated himself upon a milking-stool near the open door from which he would be able to see any one who might approach. He now began to think seriously of his plans. He drew the slip of paper from the pocket of his coat and once more read the message that had startled him when he had first found it there. "Cornwallis is near. He and a score of his men were seen yesterday." The message was not signed nor directed. Startled as the young soldier had been when he had first read the words, he had concluded at last that the writer must have sent the word some time ago. It seemed impossible to believe that the famous commander could be in the immediate vicinity. And yet Noah did not know just how far he

himself was from the camp he was seeking. At all events he was positive that the leader of the redcoats in the house was none other than Cornwallis. And he, or his aide, had said that the band was to remain perhaps two or three days in the place. What a scheme it would be if he could secure the general and compel him to accompany him to Mad Anthony's regiment! How the black eyes of the dashing leader would sparkle if he should have in his power the ablest general Great Britain had sent to the colonies! What an excitement would spring up in the army. "Cornwallis a prisoner!" Already the eager young soldier fancied that he could hear the plaudits of the Continentals.

For a time Noah thought over many schemes. It was plain that the redcoats had slight fear of trouble here. If that were not so, they never would have acknowledged who the leader was. And they had done so freely, too freely at first to be convincing, Noah thought, although now he had no question concerning the identity of the man. What could he do? Was there not some way by which the commander might be separated from his protecting guard? Several projects were carefully considered, but none appeared

feasible, when at last Noah saw the woman who had been his hostess approaching the barn. The sun had disappeared and in the dusk she could not see him.

In a low voice Noah called to her, "Here I am — just inside the door."

The woman at once entered the rude little building and extending her hand said, "I have brought you some supper. Dried peaches are the only things I have to eat. I dare not go to the house."

"Thank you. It is good of you to share with me."

"I am glad to do that. It is good to feel that I am not entirely alone. And yet I am sure your danger is greater than mine."

"Why do you say that?" said Noah quickly.

"They will come to the barn — you cannot hide here. You must go before they come."

"And leave you here alone?"

"I do not fear them!" The woman tried to speak boldly, but a trembling in her voice betrayed her fear.

"One man cannot do much against so many."

"That is true, though if they would come one at a time I should not fear. I wonder

what the redcoats think our men can do if a 'woman' can serve one of them as you did the man that came to you. That was wonderful! I never saw such strength! You treated that soldier as if he were a baby."

"He was not very strong. If I stay here a day or two, will you help me?"

"How can I help you?"

"I don't know just how, but if I could see Lord Cornwallis alone I might be able to induce him to go with me."

"Where?"

"To visit the Continental camp," replied Noah dryly.

"You never could do it! You must not think of it! You must think of yourself. You can take your horse and leave in the night. The redcoats have n't come to the barn yet, and I reckon they won't before morning. They 'll be likely to leave their horses outside, the night is so warm. To-morrow it will all be different."

"Yes."

"I will tell you how you can go through the woods and strike the road about a mile from here."

"I know that what you say is all true," assented Noah. "I 'd stand a better chance

to get away now than I will to-morrow — just as you say. But I shall wait. I may find some way to get the general. If I had him down here, I am sure he would not refuse to go with me," he added grimly.

"That is foolish even to think of. You never can do that. He won't be left alone a minute, and you'll only get yourself into trouble. You'll be shot or hanged."

"Still I shall wait," said Noah doggedly. "Besides, after all you have done for me I can't leave you here alone with these redcoats, though I'm sure from what I have heard of Lord Cornwallis he will not let you be harmed personally."

"Do you think Cornwallis is really here?"

"I am sure," replied Noah confidently. "It would do more to help the colonies if he could be secured than anything that has happened in the whole war. I shall try to think up some scheme. It's a pity with your quick wit if we can't find some way to do it."

"I'm going to take the horses into the woods. It is dark enough now. I never was more thankful than when I saw the redcoats did not come to the barn — that is, no one came except the man you sent back," she added with a low laugh.

"These fellows are not out for forage. I wish I knew what they were after. Come on, I'll help you with the horses. You'll have to lead the way and I'll try to follow."

Cautiously the woman led out the black mare which the two Tories, who first had come to the place, had expected to secure. Without a halter, simply throwing her arm around the neck of the intelligent animal, the woman advanced toward the near-by woods. Almost as if she understood the need of caution the horse followed obediently, picking her way daintily and manifestly having full confidence in her guide.

As soon as Noah saw that the shelter of the woods had been gained, he led out the horse which he had ridden. The beast was somewhat rested from the long ride of the preceding day, and the young soldier was fearful that he would not be as successful as his friend had been. He glanced nervously toward the house as he led his horse out of the barn. There were shouts and songs that he heard, but the noisy demonstrations were somewhat of a relief, as they might drown any sound his horse might make. He too was successful, and in a brief time saw the woman amongst the dark shadows of the trees.

"Good!" she exclaimed in a low voice. "I reckon we are all right now. Here! Be quick!" she added, speaking to her horse, which had emitted a low whinny when Noah drew near. "I don't believe they can hear us at the house, but you must be careful," she said to the young soldier. "Follow me and keep close."

In silence Noah followed his guide five minutes or more, and then halted as the woman stopped. "I 'll take both horses in here," she explained, pointing as she spoke to a clump of bushes. "The men won't see the horses even if they pass this place, which I reckon they won't do. We 'll tie both animals to the trees and I 'll come here in the morning and see if they are both safe. I 'm sorry they can't be fed, but if one has n't anything to give them, why, they can't eat, that 's all there is to it."

In a brief time Noah and the daring woman retraced their steps, the young soldier peering keenly about him to make certain that he could find his way to the hiding-place when occasion demanded.

As they came to the border of the woods, Noah said, "I 've thought of a scheme."

"For what?"

"For getting Cornwallis."

"I reckon you'd do better not to try any such foolish trick. What is your scheme?" she added.

"To-morrow morning you go to the house and ask to see Lord Cornwallis himself. Tell him you have n't anything to eat — "

"I have n't in the smokehouse — that is, I have n't anything except dried peaches."

"Tell him that, then. I'm sure he won't refuse you permission to take some food from the house."

"I don't know about that."

"He won't — he is n't that kind of a man. Then when you get something to eat, you must ask him to come out here to see the horses."

"And let him take both?"

"I'll be here," said Noah quietly.

"And be shot before you could do anything? Besides, he won't come himself, he 'll send some one."

"That 's just what you 'll have to prevent. You can say that the horses are hidden and that no one could find them if he should search all day. If he won't come to see them, then you can refuse to tell where they are. Don't you see — "

"I see that it can't be done."

"You can try, can't you?"

"It won't do any good."

"Will you try it if we don't think of something better before morning?"

"I'll think about it. I don't believe any such trick will work."

"Yes, it will. You must tell him what a wonderful animal you have, how swift she is, and intelligent —"

"Say no more," broke in the woman. "It's a madman's scheme and will get you hanged or shot — to say nothing of myself. Still, I'll think about it," she added, as she started toward the smokehouse.

"If you decide to do it, let me know."

"How? I don't want to come to the barn. Don't you think it would be better anyway if you should go back to the place where we left the horses?"

"No. I'm going to stay in the barn to-night. I want to be where I can know what is going on at the house. If you decide to try my plan, as I'm sure you will, when you start for the house to-morrow morning swing your sunbonnet three times with your right hand. I'll be on the lookout and I'll understand. I'll stay in the barn so that I can be near if I am needed —"

"You 'll not be needed. I 'm not afraid."

"Well, I shall stay anyway until I see you and Lord Cornwallis coming, then I shall start for the place where the horses are. On the way or when you get there I 'll try to —"

"He 'll never come," again interrupted the woman. "I just know he won't, and I'm afraid it will mean more trouble for both of us."

"It 's worth trying anyway," said Noah eagerly, as he turned to the barn, where he stood watching his companion until he saw her enter the smokehouse. Then he entered the barn and soon was asleep on the bare floor, for there was no hay.

Early the following morning he was awake, and standing near the open door waited for the woman to appear. He soon saw some of the redcoats astir near the house, but two hours passed before the woman came out of her place of refuge. Noah watched her as she stood for a brief time looking at the house and the soldiers near it. He was positive that he understood the feelings which possessed her. Defenseless she had been compelled to give up her house to the marauding band. Her possessions were at the mercy of the invaders. She herself was not safe, although no one had come near her place of refuge in the night.

Perhaps the knowledge that she had a rifle and would not hesitate to use it if occasion demanded was not the least of the protection she had.

Suddenly Noah looked more intently at the daring woman. She had started quickly toward the house and was swinging her sunbonnet in her right hand as she advanced.

CHAPTER XVIII

A VAIN REFUGE

THE approaching woman was soon seen by the soldiers, and as she came near one of the redcoats turned to her and said roughly, "What do you want here?"

"Food," she replied simply.

"A fine place in which to find it," he laughed brutally. "We might let you in to look for it. If you know where any is, you know more than we do, for we have been searching ever since we came and we have n't found any. Even the poultry is all gone."

"There is meal."

"And what is that? It's fit only for horses!"

"It has helped to make some sturdy men in the colonies," retorted the woman.

"They 'll soon be all hanged!"

"Not by the hirelings of King George!"

"The women are worse rebels than the men!"

"So I have heard, and I have heard also that the redcoats seem to be far more busy

fighting or robbing the women than they are in trying to meet the men of the colonies."

"That 's a lie!"

"Is it?" asked the woman simply.

"You know it is!"

"No, I do not know. Of course I have not been with my husband and his neighbors, consequently I cannot say what the Dutch Butchers and the other hired followers of your king do in the open field. I think I do understand how brave they are when they find one lone woman on a plantation, and the courage required to seize her little store of food and drive her out of her home which they at once occupy. Oh, yes, I reckon I know much about the daring of the royal troops. I have a fine example before me now," she added, bowing to the angry soldier as she spoke.

"You deserve to be hanged."

"Few people receive their just deserts. If all did, I reckon I know where the redcoats belong."

"Where?"

"There is a place where the fire is never quenched. The color of the region is red, and some of it has been used to dye the coats of the inmates who have escaped without chang-

ing their colors or in any way improving their conduct."

Several soldiers now were assembled about their comrade, and it was plain that they were enjoying the retorts of the fearless woman.

Their banter increased the rage of the taunted officer, and as he became more angry his voice increased in volume. "Get away! You're not safe here, neither are you wanted!" he shouted.

"Let me get some of my food and I shall go back at once to the place where you have compelled me to stay."

"Not a morsel!"

"I have only a few dried peaches."

"That is better than you deserve! When we have hanged or shot all the rebel men, we shall still have to subdue the rebel women. They are vixens —"

"I have heard that Lord Howe entertained similar views. I did not know that Lord Cornwallis also was of that mind."

"Get away!"

"I would see Lord Cornwallis."

"That you cannot!"

"But I must see him and at once."

"Go back to your smokehouse!"

"May I not see the general? I have word for him in which he will be deeply interested. I assure you when he hears that one of his boastful upstarts has prevented him from receiving the word I have brought —"

"Leave the place, woman, or I shall not be able to keep myself in control! If you don't go, I shall help you!"

"Be careful, Ned," suggested one of the officers. "Remember how Tom tried that with the other woman. He isn't able to get out of bed this morning!"

The laugh which greeted the warning increased the rage of the soldier. His face was almost purple as he roared, "Go back to your quarters!"

"Is there not some gentleman here who will help me to secure some of the food in the house? Or if not, who will take my word to the general?" she inquired, as she turned to the men.

No one responded to her appeal, although several plainly were sympathizing with her. Either the fear of their comrade's wrath or their ignorance of the place where the meal was, held them back.

"Then if I am not to be permitted to take some of my own provisions, I shall not remain

here to beg," said the woman quietly. "I bid you all good-day, gentlemen."

One of the men started to follow her as she walked toward the smokehouse, but whatever his motive may have been he was sharply recalled by his companions, and the woman, unmolested, continued on her way.

Noah was watching from the door of the barn, and the failure of the woman to induce the commander to inspect the horses was at once apparent. He did not venture to go to the smokehouse, for the men at the house still were watching, and though it was plain that they were not to be permitted to molest the "women," he did not deem it wise at the time to incur any risks.

When two hours had passed and some of the soldiers had mounted their horses and ridden swiftly away, his hostess came to the barn.

"You ought to wear the dress I gave you," she said, as she glanced at the garment which Noah had placed on a peg near by.

"I can put it on, if it 's necessary," he replied, his face assuming a wry expression as he spoke. "Tell me what you did at the house."

"Nothing. They would neither let me have

any meal nor take any message to the general. I reckon it is better that they did not."

"I wish there was some way of getting him away from the others."

"I am afraid it cannot be done."

"We 'll wait. There may be another chance before night."

"No. You must take your horse and leave."

"Why? Is there anything new?" Noah inquired hastily.

"No. The redcoats will come to the barn, though, before long. There is n't any question about that, and I can't understand why they have n't come before this."

"They think there are just two women left on the place."

"That may be true, but they 'll be looking for forage. Besides, you have n't had anything to eat this morning and there is slight prospect that you will have anything except dried peaches if you stay."

"You don't think the redcoats suspect me, do you?"

"I can't say. I should think they might after they saw what happened to the man that stopped you last night," she added, with a smile. "The men said that he was still in

bed. It may be that he will come armed or bring some of his comrades with him when he gets up."

"That is true," assented Noah thoughtfully. "Perhaps I 'd better not stay here, though if there is any chance of getting Lord Cornwallis — "

"There is n't," she broke in. "He never will be left alone. Besides, he 'll be armed and you will not."

"I am not afraid if I can just have him by himself. I think I could secure his pistols before he would have any chance to use them. I don't like to leave without trying. I am safe — "

An expression on the face of the woman before him caused Noah to turn and look quickly behind him. Peering into the open slide behind the nearest stall he saw the face of the redcoat whom he had treated so roughly the preceding night.

At the same time the woman exclaimed, "Here are two men near the corner of the barn. They have the place surrounded. There is a door on the other side of the barn! Turn the button and open it. It is nearer the woods. Go! Don't delay a moment!" she added in a whisper.

Noah was aware that the face he had seen at the open slide had now disappeared. Instantly concluding that the barn was surrounded, he ran swiftly to the closed door to which the woman had pointed. He hastily turned the button, pushed the door open, and then without hesitating an instant leaped to the ground.

His appearance was greeted by a shout, although not a gun was discharged.

The woods were not more than forty feet distant, and Noah's supreme desire was to gain their shelter. He heard the shouts and calls that came from behind him, but he did not turn to look at his pursuers. He was running at his utmost speed, and almost before the pursuit was begun he gained the shelter he was seeking. Even then he did not stop, and hardly aware of the direction he was taking plunged forward. Leaping over the fallen timber, darting through the brush, his trail was plainly marked, and a brief time sufficed to convince him that the redcoats were close behind him. Weakened by his lack of food his strength would not be equal to the demands of a prolonged race, as he was well aware, and consequently he was watching keenly for some place of refuge. In his hasty flight

from the barn his gun had been left behind and he was defenseless.

At last, convinced by the sounds of crashing bushes that he would be unable to distance his pursuers, he suddenly flung himself upon the ground and crawled into a large log that had an opening in one end where the wood had decayed. Digging with his hands into the soft mass, he worked his way farther into the log. He could not hear the sound of his pursuers now. His throat was almost choked by the dust, nor had he any means of knowing whether or not he had penetrated far enough into the hollow log to conceal his entire body. It was now impossible to make farther progress, and, almost blinded, choking with the dust, he drew his feet as far as possible within the shelter and lay still.

An interval of only a few minutes elapsed before the half-dozen redcoats had arrived at the log in which Noah had tried to find a hiding-place. The evidences of his efforts to conceal himself were too manifest to be mistaken, and the band halted instantly, as one of them called out, "Here! Look here! He must be in this log!"

A hasty investigation revealed the absence of traces of the young soldier's flight beyond

the fallen log, and soon the pursuers were standing about the place, undecided what course to follow to induce the man whom they suspected of being inside the log to come out.

"We have you!" called one of the men. "You must give yourself up!"

Noah heard the call, but did not move.

"Go in after him!" suggested one of the soldiers.

"That 's the way!" said another. "You 're the very man to do it, Joe!"

"Thank you kindly, but I am not an expert," retorted the first speaker.

"The only way is to smoke him out," suggested a third soldier.

"That's true; pile some brush on the log and we'll soon have our quarry," said the man who had spoken first.

The conversation ceased, although Noah in his hiding-place was convinced from the sounds he heard that the man's suggestions were being carried out. He heard the sound of the brush as it was thrown upon the log, and his fear increased. It was manifest that he was to be burned out. Between falling into the hands of his enemies and being burned there must be a speedy choice. Before the fire was kindled the young soldier began to push himself

backward toward the opening by which he had entered.

Before his task was completed his feet were seized, and there was a loud shout from the men who had discovered him.

"Here's our victim!" shouted one of the band. "Come and help us pull the rascal out!"

Noah did not attempt to resist, for he was aware that his predicament would be made worse by a struggle. He was helpless in the hands of his captors. He was roughly dragged from the hollow log, and as soon as his head appeared he was tightly held by three of the soldiers who seized him.

"It isn't a man! It's the devil!" exclaimed one of the soldiers, suddenly backing away from the prisoner.

Begrimed with the decayed wood which covered his face, wet with perspiration, his clothing torn and discolored, his breathing labored, there was much in the appearance of the helpless young soldier to cause those who beheld him to believe he was scarcely human. The other redcoats, however, were not convinced by their companion's words that they were not dealing with a mortal. Their prisoner hastily was ordered to take his place in their

midst, and at once the party started toward the plantation.

Their arrival at the house was greeted by jeers from the soldiers there, and the man who had been taken was laughingly inspected. Noah stood silent in the midst of the assembly, and his apparent indifference was unchanged even when he suddenly recognized one of the uniformed men before him as the man whom he had assisted to escape from Smart Archie's guard.

CHAPTER XIX

IN THE LISTS

Quickly checking the feeling of astonishment which Noah felt as he discovered the man in the midst of the band, the young soldier saw that if he himself was known the knowledge was not betrayed by word or glance. The redcoats were still laughing at the appearance of the prisoner, and Noah speedily was aware that he was not suspected, at least by the most of the men before him, of being anything but a country lad who had fled in fear from the redcoats. His clothing was stained, his face discolored, and his bearing far from soldierly at the time.

"We made you eat dirt," laughed one of the men, as he looked at Noah.

As the young soldier did not reply, another said with a laugh, "What did you expect to find when you were burrowing in that log?"

"He ought to try to hide that face. I 'd do as much myself if I had to go around with such a face as that," said a third.

"He 's like all the rest of the rebels. Just as soon as he had one good look at us, he ran, and when he found he could n't get away he tried to dig a hole in the ground and then crawl in and pull the hole in after him," laughed another.

"What were you doing here?" inquired one of the men, as he looked sharply at the young soldier.

"Trying to get away," replied Noah simply, speaking for the first time since his capture.

"Do you live here?"

"You saw me."

"He had on a woman's dress," said another member of the band as he, too, came close to the prisoner. "He 's the very one who kicked me!" he added angrily, as he recognized the young soldier.

A shout of laughter greeted the soldier's words, and for a moment his comrades banteringly suggested that "now he had his opportunity to get even with the 'woman,'" a suggestion which Noah at first believed the man was about to adopt. If such an inclination, however, was felt by the man he restrained it, either from fear of his friends or from his vivid recollection of the treatment he had received at the hands of the prisoner.

"What shall we do with the fellow?" finally an officer inquired.

"Shut him up somewhere and take him with us when we go back to camp," replied one who had assisted in taking Noah.

"What good will that do? He's only a bumpkin. King George will not get much for feeding him," suggested another with a laugh.

"That 's so," acknowledged the officer, laughing again as he glanced at Noah's woe-begone appearance. "I fancy the rebels will be hurt more if we leave him with them. They 'll have to feed him, anyway."

"He looks as though he had n't been over-fed of late," said one.

"He's no soldier. He's just a bumpkin who belongs here. Even the woman's husband would not take him with him when he ran away," suggested another.

"This fellow was so scared that he tried to pass himself off as a woman."

"He put up a pretty good fight, did n't he, Joe?" laughed one of the band, as he turned tauntingly to the soldier who had received such rough treatment at the hands of the "woman" at the barn the preceding night.

"Here comes the woman of the place," said one.

As Noah looked up he saw his hostess approaching, and his alarm both for herself and for him was not quieted by the sight.

"What do you want now?" roughly demanded an officer as the woman drew near.

"I must beg food of you."

"Is that all? Well, you 'll not get any. We 'd rather shoot a rebel any day than feed him."

"But I have had nothing except a few dried peaches since you drove me out of my house," pleaded the woman.

"Dried peaches are good enough for you and your like."

"Will you not let me have even a little meal?"

"Not a mouthful!" said the officer brutally.

"Then I must starve."

"If more rebels would follow your example we 'd soon have peace in the colonies."

"I must beg of you —"

"You must *not* beg of me," broke in the officer savagely. "'T will do you no good! We shall not feed rebels!"

"I do not ask *you* for food," pleaded the woman, her voice breaking into a sob as she spoke. "All I ask is for permission to enter

the house and get some of *my* corn-meal. I assure you it is only a little—"

"Be off! Betake yourself to the place where you belong!"

"And you will not help me or permit me to help myself?"

"Be off, I tell you, or it will be the worse for you and all your kind!"

"The Lord will punish you as you deserve!" exclaimed the woman, her eyes flashing as she spoke.

"He doesn't seem to take much interest in rebels—at least, he has not up to this day," laughed the officer roughly. "Begone!"

The woman turned away, and as Noah watched her he saw that she was weak and apparently was ill. A feeling of anger swept over the young soldier, and for an instant he was tempted to rush to the aid of his friend. At that moment, however, he saw the man whom he had helped looking keenly at him, and the glance served to restore a measure of restraint to Noah. In apparent indifference he watched the woman until she entered the smokehouse and closed the door.

"Shall we keep this fellow or let him go?" demanded the officer, as he again turned to his men.

A diversity of opinion was at once manifest among the soldiers, some claiming that the prisoner was only a "bumpkin" and should be sent away, and others that he ought to be kept, since his actions of the preceding night had shown that he was by no means the harmless person he now appeared to be.

"We'll shut him up in the corn-crib," said the officer, after he had listened to the discordant words. "He'll be safe there for the night and to-morrow morning we'll decide what to do."

In accordance with the suggestion Noah was led to the crib and compelled to crawl through the small opening, which was then closed and barred, and the prisoner was left to himself. He had not been given food or water, and now that his fast had been unbroken for so many hours he was suffering keenly. A feeling of despondency crept over him as the day passed and the night drew on. The thought of what his hostess was compelled to endure strengthened him in a measure, but he had almost decided to try to break away from his prison-house when the dusk should deepen. No watch or guard had been stationed near the crib in which he was confined, yet he well knew that his actions could be seen or heard by the men who were moving about the place.

He was thinking of a plan for action when he was startled by the voice of some one speaking to him. "Noah," called a man, speaking in low tones.

"Yes," whispered the young soldier quickly.

"Here is a bite of food for you." Noah quickly grasped the food which was extended between the bars. "Don't try to get away. I'll help you."

"Why don't you help me now?" asked Noah hastily. "You can take away the bar and I can crawl out when it is dark —"

"No, no," whispered the man whom Noah now recognized as the one whom he had assisted to escape from Smart Archie. "There are good reasons. Don't try to get away. Wait till morning."

"Can you get me some water?"

"I am afraid I can't. I shall be seen. I must not stay any longer."

"Will you get something for the woman to eat?"

"She has been fed. One of the men took her something a little while ago."

"I wish you would take away the bar."

"No, no, I cannot. You must not try to get away."

"Is it really Lord Cornwallis who is here?"

"Hush," said the man warningly. "Don't say it even if you think it. Don't let these men see that you even suspect anything. I think some one is coming," he added hastily.

When Noah looked back at the place where the man had stood he was unable to see any one. The friendly voice was gone. Some one, however, was approaching the corn-crib, and Noah hastily advanced to the corner where the man could be seen and hailed him.

"Will you please bring me a drink of water?" he begged.

"Yes," replied the soldier, for Noah now recognized the garb of the man near the crib.

The man departed and soon returned with a gourd filled with water.

"I can't give it to you, I'm afraid, now that I have it," he said.

"Can't you take the bar away just for a minute?"

"No."

"I'll give you my word not to try to get away while the bar is gone."

"Can't do it."

"Then pour it between the sides. I'll open my mouth — "

"That will not do any good. — Here; wait a minute," the soldier said, as he turned away.

In a brief time he returned, having a corn-stalk in his hand. Hastily breaking a joint he cut out the pith, leaving a small trough. Thrusting this between the slats he bade Noah take one end between his teeth, and then with the other end in the gourd which he now lifted he poured a small stream into the mouth of the prisoner.

Refreshed after his long draft, Noah thanked the soldier, and as soon as the man departed he devoured the food which his nameless friend had brought him and soon afterward stretched himself upon the floor. For a time he was thinking of the direction which had been given him not to try to escape. As the sounds from the house died away and the silence of the night crept over the plantation, he was tempted to try to break the bars and flee to the woods. Then, if he could succeed in getting his horse, he might proceed on his way to rejoin the army in the North.

The word of his friendly visitor, however, had been so pronounced and his warning so manifestly believed in, that after he had thought over the matter carefully Noah decided to abide by the advice, although it was not entirely in accord with his own feeling. The decision once made, he soon was soundly sleeping.

When he awoke he saw that the soldiers at the house were already astir, and his surprise was as great as his pleasure when soon afterward a soldier brought him some bacon and fried corn-meal, of which the prisoner made a hearty breakfast, but he was not prepared for the summons of the man who had brought him his food.

"You are to come with me," said the man quietly.

"Where?"

"You will soon see."

Noah with difficulty crawled through the exit and followed his guide. Obtaining permission to stop at the well, he drank of the water which he raised in the bucket and then washed some of the dirt from his face and hands, his conductor good-naturedly waiting for him till the task was accomplished.

Once more following his guide, Noah was led to the opposite side of the house, where he was surprised to see the score or more of redcoats seated in a semicircle on the ground.

"Here you are!" said the officer, who the evening before had been in command. "We hear you are a famous wrestler," he added with a laugh.

Noah glanced quickly at the speaker. What

did the man know? Did he suspect who his prisoner was? Had his acquaintance, whom Noah saw seated in the circle, betrayed him?

Striving to conceal the consternation which he felt as he heard the question, Noah said, "I make no claims. What makes you think I can wrestle?"

"Nobody knows whether you can or not. Do you want to try?"

"Why should I try?"

"Some of us want to see if you can."

"What for?"

"Oh, we 'll let you enter the lists. We can't quite make up our minds whether we ought to keep you or let you go."

"What has wrestling to do with that?" asked Noah roughly.

As he looked about him the faces of the men showed their interest, but there was not one among them on which he saw any but an expression of derision.

"We've decided to let you settle the matter by trial of combat. If you are afraid, why, we 'll settle it some other way," said the officer.

"I am not afraid," said Noah quietly. "If I throw my man, then I am to go free, am I?"

"That 's it."

"And if he throws me?"

"Then we 'll hold you till Lord Cornwallis or some one else decides whether or not you 're fit to keep."

"Bring on your man."

A loud laugh arose from the circle as the redcoat who manifestly had been selected at once stepped before his fellows. As Noah looked at his opponent he was startled as he saw who his contestant was.

CHAPTER XX

THE CHAMPION WRESTLER

The soldier who had been chosen to defend the side of the redcoats was the officer who had been so brutal to the woman whose home had been taken from her. He was a young man, not more than twenty-three, Noah thought as he looked quietly at his antagonist. As the young soldier marked the manifest strength of the man, and his confidence in his ability to overcome the "bumpkin" displayed in his bearing, Noah's anger was kindled in a moment. He recalled the plea of the suffering woman and the taunting refusal to let her have any of the meal in the house, and he decided that he would do his utmost to teach the feelingless soldier a lesson. And yet, as Noah studied his opponent, he was aware that he was to have no mean contest. The man not only was exceedingly strong, but there was also a power of quick motion which as a wrestler added much to his ability. The redcoats in the semicircle manifestly were so confident in the prowess of their champion that

they were looking upon the coming contest as more or less of a joke. In their thought the "bumpkin" was to provide a brief interval of entertainment in their somewhat monotonous wait for Lord Cornwallis to complete his plan, whatever that might be, in remaining so long at a place at a distance from the main army.

A cheer from the men caused Noah to glance hastily toward the house, where, to his surprise, he saw the general himself approaching the ring. His interest, too, became plain after a brief explanation had been made to him by one of his officers of what the assembly implied. There was a smile on the ruddy face of the leader, as he looked keenly at the two contestants, which increased Noah's determination to do his utmost, though he was well aware that his recent experiences had not been of a nature to fit him for a strenuous wrestling-bout. And he was confident that the match in which he was about to engage was certain to prove a hard one.

Both contestants now threw aside their coats, Noah handing his to the nearest soldier without glancing at the man who received it.

"We don't want to take any unfair advantage of you," said the officer, who had sug-

gested the strange contest. "If you don't want to go in, we 'll let you withdraw even now."

"I don't want to withdraw," said Noah quietly. "All I want is that you shall live up to the agreement you made with me."

"Oh, we 'll do that," said the officer, laughing, as his comrades did at the reply of Noah. "Now which shall it be, — one fall or the best two out of three?"

"I don't care," said Noah. At his reply another laugh came from the assembled watchers, a laugh which somehow seemed to add to the determination of the young soldier to do his best. "Let the other man decide that," he added.

"What do you say?" asked the officer lightly of Noah's opponent.

"I 'll be generous," laughed the wrestler. "If this fellow wants any more after the first fall, I 'll be very glad indeed to accommodate him."

"What shall the contest be?" asked the officer of Noah. "Have you any choice?"

"I don't care whether it is side hold or square," replied Noah indifferently.

"And what is that, pray?" laughed the redcoat. "Upon my word, I don't think I ever heard that expression."

"Never mind, then," said Noah, looking calmly into the soldier's face. "We 'll not call it by any name. We 'll just see which can put the other on his back. Will that suit you?"

"Perfectly, thank you," grinned the soldier.

"Are you both ready?" inquired the officer.

"Wait a minute, please," called one of the assembly, as he arose and ran to the side of his comrade who was to engage in the contest. The man whispered something to the wrestler which the latter apparently disregarded, for he shook his head and said roughly, "Don't you be alarmed."

"The match is to be 'catch as catch can,'" said the officer. "When I shall count three and then say 'Go,' you will both understand that the match is on. Ready, gentlemen? 'One — two — three! Go!'"

Before the final word had been spoken the redcoat leaped at Noah and, to the surprise of the young soldier, the man, instead of trying to seize him, attempted to strike him in the ribs with his fist. But Noah was keenly alert and prepared for any movement. As the man leaped forward again Noah stepped quickly aside, thrust out his right foot and tripped

his opponent. As the man staggered a moment Noah pushed him violently and the man fell face downward upon the ground.

A cry of anger arose from the spectators, but before any of them could act, the wrestler, his face livid with rage, leaped to his feet and started for Noah. The latter drew back, and his action being mistaken for fear, a shout of derision came from the watching assembly.

The young soldier's intention to appeal to the officer to stop the contest was instantly abandoned. It was manifest to him now that the struggle was not to be limited to a wrestling-match. His opponent was furious at his fall and was intent upon displaying to his friends his ability to crush his antagonist. The man was somewhat taller than Noah, and plainly was at least twenty pounds heavier, but it was not the first time the young soldier had struggled against odds as great as these.

He was aware for a moment of an expression of alarm on the face of one of the men in the semicircle, and was dimly conscious that it was the man whom he had befriended. Not another face looked at him with friendly eyes, and he was also speedily aware that even the

man whose momentary alarm he had seen would not be able to aid him. He was alone in the contest, and by no means confident that he was to receive fair treatment. But his determination now was strongly aroused, and whatever the outcome might be he was eager to throw the man who was rushing upon him.

Noah succeeded in keeping his contestant away from him, at least from striking or grasping him for a time, though he purposely gave way before the rushes of the man. The excitement of the spectators was increasing now, and there were calls for their champion to "eat up" his opponent. The actions of Noah also confirmed them in their belief that the "bumpkin" was afraid.

Encouraged by the calls of his comrades and still further enraged by the success of his opponent in avoiding his rushes, the redcoat's efforts redoubled. His face soon was wet with perspiration and his breathing was becoming more labored — signs of weakness which Noah noticed with increasing satisfaction. He had tested his opponent by this time and was convinced that the man's powers of endurance were less than his. Not a false movement was made by Noah, who was trying

to weary the man without using too much of his own strength.

"Stand hup like a man, m' lad!" shouted one of the spectators to Noah.

"Don't run from him!" called another derisively.

"'E won't heat you!" called a third.

"This is not a race, it 's a bout!" shouted still another.

"W'y don't you go hin hand get 'im?" demanded still another, as he called to the champion of the redcoats.

The jeers and cheers were confused in Noah's mind, but he was mindful only of the man before him. His experience in previous contests now stood him in good stead. He was carefully reserving his strength and at the same time doing his utmost to wear out his opponent. Twice he had received blows, and though they each called forth a derisive shout from the watchers he had not been seriously harmed by either. The redcoats had risen from the ground by this time and were pressing in upon the contestants. Aware of the disadvantage at which he would soon be placed, if the eager spectators came nearer, Noah decided that the time for action had come.

The "wrestler" of the redcoats now was becoming wilder in his efforts to seize and hold his antagonist. The day was warm and the labors of the men had been unremitting. Twice he had almost succeeded in seizing Noah, but he had failed in each attempt when Noah flung off his grip. The effect, however, had been to make the man redouble his efforts. The young soldier saw that now his opponent was almost blinded by the streams of perspiration which were running down his face, and that his breathing was still more labored than it had been at any time since the contest began.

Waiting an instant as the man once more rushed savagely upon him, Noah stepped quickly aside, whirled abruptly about, and suddenly seized his antagonist by the waist and lifted him bodily from the ground. The man was striking wildly about him and kicking still more savagely, but the young soldier had timed his own action carefully. Disregarding the rain of blows, which now of necessity were not strong, he braced himself carefully, and then exerting all his strength he threw the man heavily on the ground before him.

As Noah shook his head to free his eyes

from his hair, he instantly braced himself to receive the attack of the man as soon as the latter regained his footing. To his surprise the man did not move, but was lying where he had fallen and was groaning heavily.

His previous experiences in the encounter made Noah cautious. Restraining his impulse to go to the man and help him to rise, he waited to make certain that his antagonist was not trying to trick him. While the young soldier delayed, the comrades of the fallen man rushed to his assistance. He was lifted to his feet, and Noah as well as the others saw that his face was colorless and that his features were distorted by pain.

Instantly Noah darted forward, but before he could speak he was roughly pushed aside. A hasty examination of the sufferer was made, and then the officer who had presided over the "wrestling-match" said shortly, "Clear the way there and take him to the house."

"What is wrong?" asked Noah.

"His right arm is broken. His neck may be, too. That was an extraordinary fall and may cost you dearly," said the officer.

"I'm sorry I hurt him."

"'T was no way to wrestle. That was no bout—"

"I know it. I did n't seek to change the agreement."

"You had no right to do what you did."

"I had a right to defend myself," said Noah quietly. "I was willing to stand by what you said."

The officer did not reply for a moment as he gave directions for the carrying of the injured man to the house. In the excitement Noah found himself somewhat ignored, though the malignant glances of the disappointed spectators of the contest were freely bestowed upon him.

Waiting until more of the redcoats were gone from the place, the young soldier slowly turned to look for his coat which he had left in the keeping of one of the watchers, but he was unable to find either the coat or the man.

"Where are you going? What are you doing?" demanded the officer, as he watched Noah.

"I am looking for my coat," replied Noah. "It does not appear to be here. Am I free to leave this place now any time?"

"No!"

"That was the agreement. I did not want to wrestle. It was the condition you made."

"You are not to go — yet."

"Then I 'll appeal to Lord Cornwallis himself," said Noah abruptly, turning, as he spoke, toward the house whither the general had followed his men.

The officer hesitated a moment and then without a word followed.

Ignoring the threatening glances which greeted him as he entered the house, Noah pushed his way forward until he found himself standing before the man he was seeking.

"My lord," he said slowly, "these men refuse to abide by their agreement."

"What agreement?" inquired the general, as he looked sharply at the young soldier.

"That if I threw this man," replied Noah, glancing at his recent antagonist who now was lying on the bed in the room where the soldiers were standing, "I should be permitted to leave."

"Who made the agreement?"

"That man," said Noah, pointing at the officer who had followed him to the house.

"He had no right to make any such promise," said Cornwallis.

"Whether or not he had the right, I do not know. He surely made it. I threw the man and now I claim my right. I have always heard that an Englishman's sense of fairness was to be trusted."

"'T was no fair contest, my lord," spoke up the officer. "This fellow threw his man when he was off his guard."

"That was a part of the agreement," suggested Noah quietly.

A brief conversation followed, and then the general said, "It seems just, yet I do not know who you are. Do you reside here?"

"No, my lord."

"How came you to be here?"

"I stopped here, that's all. Your men found me when I came."

"Dressed as a woman," said the officer angrily.

"And I found this paper in the pocket of the coat he gave me to hold," said one of the men, approaching Cornwallis and handing him the slip which Noah had found in the pocket of the coat which he had appropriated in the cabin on the island in the swamp.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SPY

"WHAT does this mean?" asked the British general, as he looked keenly at the young prisoner. "Who wrote this? Where did you find it?"

"I do not know who wrote it," replied Noah.

"Who sent it to you?"

"No one."

"Be careful, young man!" warned Cornwallis. "Tell me the truth."

"I am telling you the truth. I found that piece of paper in the pocket of this coat. The coat is not mine."

"Whose is it?"

"That I do not know."

"How does it happen that you were wearing it then?" inquired the general sharply.

"Mine was wet and I exchanged."

"Do you live here?"

"No, sir."

"What are you doing here then?"

"I'll leave just as soon as you let me carry out the agreement."

"What agreement?" asked Cornwallis.

"The one your soldiers made with me that if I should throw my man I should be permitted to depart at once."

"Where would you go?"

"Into the country."

"Will you give me your word of honor that you will not go to the army of Marquis Lafayette?"

"Where is that?" asked Noah, looking blankly into the face of the general.

Cornwallis laughed, and turning to the man whom Noah had befriended he inquired, "Do you recognize this fellow?"

"I know but few men in the South. I came from Jersey," the man replied.

"The fellow is powerful — he must be, to dispose of Lieutenant Frye as he did. Have you any suspicion that he is more than he pretends to be?"

"I know just what you know, my lord. I saw him throw the lieutenant as if he had been a baby. It strikes me that he would be a good man to take with us."

"How say you?" inquired Lord Cornwallis, turning to the prisoner as he spoke. "Will you go with us?"

"Where are you going?"

"To my army."

"Where is that?"

"Not far away. I personally will see to it that you are enrolled in the best company of royalists. Of course, you are a friend of the King?"

"I have no wish to fight for him."

"Every man must take his part in crushing this rebellion. We have it almost ended now. As soon as we shall take the Marquis, Virginia will he left helpless and the useless struggle will stop."

"When will that be?" Noah asked quietly.

"Very soon," laughed the general. "I shall not compel you to come with us, young man. We expect to depart in an hour. I shall have my men live up to their word, and, if you prefer, you may remain here. If, however, you will come with us, as I said I shall be pleased to see that you receive a place in our troops. When I go back to England, if you do as well as I believe you will, I will take you with me and promise you a position in His Majesty's troops. No one can foretell what the future may have for you."

As Noah looked up, he saw that his friend was looking steadily at him. An almost imperceptible nod startled the young soldier, and

for a moment he hesitated before he said to the general, "If you are not to leave for an hour, you will let me think over this matter first?"

"Certainly," replied the general, as he turned away.

Noah was aware that Lord Cornwallis had not spoken seriously. Doubtless in his mind the trouble was merely a quarrel between some of his men and a country lad who in some surprising manner had chanced to best the champion of the band in a physical contest. If the "bumpkin" could be induced to join the troops, perhaps a valuable recruit might thus be obtained. That Cornwallis had given the matter anything more than the attention of a passing moment, Noah did not believe. Indeed, the general had not thought it worth while to ask more questions concerning the slip of paper which had been found in the pocket of his coat.

Relieved by the thought, Noah still was perplexed by the expression he had seen in the face of his friend. What did it mean? Disregarding the glances of dislike that followed him as he departed from the room, Noah noticed that the man upon whose friendship he was more or less relying to aid him gave

him a quick look, expressive of something important. Outside the house, confident now that after Lord Cornwallis had virtually given him permission to depart if he chose he would not be molested, Noah sauntered near the barn. Soon he was not surprised to see the man for whom he was waiting leave the house and follow him as he walked slowly toward the barn.

"It would be well, Noah Dare, if you would come with us," said the man in a low voice.

"Why?" inquired Noah in surprise.

"I might help you to get away when the proper time came and you could carry word to the Marquis."

"Tell me," said Noah quickly, "how you happen to be here."

"Hush," said the man warningly, as he glanced apprehensively about him. "My life depends on my not being suspected."

"How long have you been with these men?"

"Three days."

"How did you manage it?"

"I am a deserter from the ranks of the Americans, you know. I am angry at my treatment and believe that Benedict Arnold did the right thing. I hate the Americans. Arnold's work has made the redcoats believe that there are many more in the line like him. They are

waiting only for a chance to leave and then join the redcoats."

The man was speaking in a low voice, but his fear was betrayed in the manner in which he kept looking back to the house while he was speaking.

"It is dangerous work, Charley Morgan, to be a spy," said Noah.

"Hush! Don't even think that word while you are here!" said the man quickly.

"Why do you want me to come with you?"

"If you escape you can carry word to the Marquis, or—"

"Give me the word now. I'll carry it."

"I have thought of that, but I have not much to tell. Cornwallis has had a meeting with Tarleton. They both expected the Tories of North Carolina and Virginia to come to them—"

"Have they come? Are they coming?" broke in the young soldier.

"No—that is, not many. I am sure from what I hear that Cornwallis expects to attack Lafayette within a few days."

"And the Marquis does not know this?"

"How can he know? He believes that the redcoats are waiting for Clinton to send fresh

troops from New York before an engagement will be made."

"Can the Marquis defend himself?"

"No; he will be crushed if Cornwallis attacks him."

"What can I do?"

"Tell the Marquis of the plan of the redcoats."

"Where is Lafayette now?"

"Not far from Petersburg."

"How far is that from here?"

"I can't tell you exactly. It may be thirty or it may be fifty miles."

"As near as that?" asked Noah quickly.

"Yes. And Cornwallis is sure that he will have reinforcements under General Phillips meet him there. The Marquis must be told this before it is too late."

"How many troops will Cornwallis have there?"

"Five thousand — all veterans and well equipped."

"How many men has Lafayette?"

"About three thousand. He will have about a thousand more when Mad Anthony joins him."

"Mad Anthony! Is he expected to join Lafayette *now?*" asked Noah excitedly.

"That is the plan. Couriers had brought word before I left the camp that Mad Anthony left York on May the twentieth—"

"How many men had he?"

"About eight hundred."

"Then I must go at once!" exclaimed Noah. "I feel sure that Cornwallis will not let these men stop me. Did you arrange that wrestling-bout?"

"I did. I thought it was your best chance to get away, though I don't know even yet how you happened to be here."

"I haven't time to tell you much," explained Noah, as he briefly related the chief events that had befallen him since he had departed from the camp of General Greene.

"I heard you had gone South as a courier," said Morgan.

"Yes."

"If you come with us I think I can help you get away, though of course there is risk. But in that way you might get a horse—"

"I have one now," interrupted Noah.

"Where?"

"Back here in the woods."

"Then if you can get away, the sooner you start the better it will be for all of us."

"I don't know the way."

"I can't give you much help. You are to go to Petersburg—that's the most important thing for you to know."

"That is all right as far as it goes. Anything more to tell me?"

"Not now. There is no knowing when I may come myself or send word, that is if I am not found out here. Just tell the Marquis that Cornwallis is rallying all his forces to move on Petersburg; that he expects Phillips to bring reinforcements, and that he will have only veterans and will outnumber our troops. Tell him I was safe when you last saw me, and that I had succeeded in passing myself off as a smaller Benedict Arnold. Blast the villain's name!" Morgan added, as an expression of fierce anger spread over his face.

"Isn't there any chance to get Cornwallis alone? If I could only do that I have two horses I can use, and I would strap him on the back of one of them and make for the camp. If we could only get him somehow as Colonel Barton got General Prescott in Newport in July, '77, we 'd —"

"Barton had a squad of men."

"Yes, I know; but if Cornwallis could be led into the woods here, I would try to get him alone."

"Can't be done, Noah," said Morgan, shaking his head positively. "The risk is too great —"

"No greater than you yourself are running."

"That may be true, but Cornwallis never is alone. Perhaps he has not forgotten what happened to Prescott. Besides, his men do not leave him."

"If you will help we might handle three of them," suggested Noah.

"You are a brave lad, Noah Dare, and if Lord Cornwallis would face you alone I am sure he would be your prisoner — for a time. But you will need all your caution as it is. Tarleton's men and a good many more of the redcoats are between here and Petersburg. If you get past them you will do well. Now, listen while I talk to this woman," Morgan added quickly, as Noah's hostess was seen approaching from the smokehouse.

"Some of the redcoats are coming, too!" exclaimed Noah anxiously, as he saw three soldiers coming from the big house.

"Get away from here!" said Morgan savagely, as the woman stopped before him. "Don't come whining around! You are getting what you deserve!"

"I am not asking you for help," said the woman quietly.

"Then what do you want?"

"Only what belongs to me. I want to go to the house."

"You'll soon have your house — or the ashes of it."

"Are you to leave?" asked the woman, her face brightening.

"That's right! We'll burn the rebel's house!" exclaimed one of the approaching soldiers, all three of them stopping as they heard Morgan's words. "The women are worse than the men!"

"The redcoats are brave, exceeding brave!" said the woman. "When our men are gone, then you hirelings are very loud in your boasting. Yet I think I saw a little while ago one of your comrades being carried into my house, and, if I mistake not, he was whimpering like a whipped child. Did you see it?"

"This fellow caught him unaware," said the angry soldier, turning upon Noah.

"Perhaps you will avenge your weeping comrade," taunted the woman. "There are four of you and he is alone."

"The vixen's tongue is like a rattlesnake's," said Morgan.

"Oh, she knows she is safe. Lord Cornwallis has given orders that she is not to be harmed."

"Doubtless that troubles you," laughed the woman. "It is quite unlike the orders of Tarleton, who is fearless when he attacks women and children."

"Colonel Tarleton will soon be a duke and you and your rebel husband will be his tenants. Your tongue will not wag so freely then, I fancy," exclaimed the angry soldier.

"Look!" hastily exclaimed another soldier. "There goes your bumpkin!" As he spoke he pointed to Noah, who had withdrawn from the spot and was now near the barn.

CHAPTER XXII

A RACE

Noah, startled by the call, glanced quickly behind him but did not slacken the pace at which he was walking. He had decided for several reasons that he must take advantage of the opportunity that was given him to escape from the place. The indifference of Cornwallis when he had been shown the paper on which the statement of his expected coming was written apparently indicated that he was not alarmed. Indeed he had treated the prisoner as more or less of a joke, plainly looking upon him as one of the rustics of the region and incapable of doing harm to the cause of the redcoats. The general's sense of fair play, too, had been an element that aided the young soldier, and now that he had insisted that the word of his men should be kept and the wrestler be permitted to depart, Noah felt that the time of action was not to be delayed. Accordingly when he had seen that the redcoats and his hostess were engaged in a heated and wordy debate he had

quietly withdrawn from the place, hoping to escape without attracting the attention of the men.

The young soldier saw that three of the redcoats had left the woman and were running in pursuit of him. Easily he could gain the barn before they could overtake him, he thought, but restraining the impulse to run and shut himself behind the barred door, he continued slowly on his way, and as he turned about in the doorway the men were upon him. He saw now that one of the three was the man whom he had treated so roughly when he had been disguised as a woman, and the expression on the man's face plainly indicated that he too was not unmindful of the ridiculous plight in which he had been placed in the encounter.

"Where are you going?" demanded the redcoat roughly, as the three soldiers entered the barn and stood near Noah.

"Just at present I am here. Lord Cornwallis has told me, however, that I am free to go when and where I please."

As Noah spoke he glanced at the rifle which he had brought to the barn when he had first fled from the house. The glance was intercepted by one of the redcoats, who

quickly stepped forward and took the gun in his hands, saying as he did so, "I 'll just keep this where it won't do any harm."

"That rifle belongs here," said Noah quietly.

"Well, it 's 'here,' is n't it?" laughed the soldier insolently.

Noah did not reply to the question, but he was not unmindful of what was plainly the purpose of the men. He was standing in the doorway with his back against the logs, so that he was safe from any attack from the rear and at the same time was able to see what was occurring in the barn and in the yard as well.

"You don't belong here!" said the man who had been roughly handled by Noah when the band had first arrived at the plantation.

"Don't I? Then the best thing for me to do is to take the word of Lord Cornwallis and leave."

"His lordship does not know all that we do."

"For which doubtless he is duly grateful."

"You are a rebel!"

"Am I?"

"And what 's more you 're a spy!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir. You're a soldier and found here with a note in your pocket which explains—"

"Doubtless if I was what you say I am," broke in Noah, "I should be carrying a good many slips of paper in my pockets just to let the redcoats know what I was doing."

"You're going to try to get to the camp of the Marquis."

"At least, I'll be where men keep their word."

Noah was far from feeling the ease with which he spoke. The three men were intent upon trouble. Up to this time he had not been taken seriously by the band, being looked upon merely as one of the country folk. Even his name had not been asked for. The confidence of the general must have been great, thought Noah, that his little band would easily be able to scatter any opposing force of Whigs, and he knew also that most of the men of the region had abandoned their homes and fled — the Tories to the shelter of the camp of the redcoats and the Whigs to the security which Lafayette provided as best he was able. The young soldier realized this and still he was apprehensive. The three men before him were within easy call of their comrades in the house. They had every indica-

tion of being bent on trouble — a condition of mind which Noah easily understood might be naturally cherished by the man who had been so rudely treated by the "bumpkin." He was therefore quietly watchful and prepared for any sudden onslaught his enemies might make.

Nor had he long to wait. The manifest purpose of the three redcoats to do him bodily harm became plain as two of them tried to gain a position at his side. Noah watched the men quietly, though it was impossible for him to change his position. One of the soldiers was holding a large horse-pistol in his hand and his comrade also was armed. And yet for reasons which Noah grimly thought he understood the attack was delayed.

As he glanced again at the house he realized that he must face his peril alone. Morgan already had gone back and the woman had retired to the smokehouse. The actions of some of the soldiers implied that a part of the band was about to withdraw from the plantation, for they were inspecting their saddle-girths and nearly all the horses had been bridled. He saw that none of the men apparently were giving any attention to the party at the barn, and he concluded that his three visitors had

come without explaining to the others what they were attempting to do.

"Your men are getting ready to leave," suggested Noah.

"Are they?" inquired one of the trio indifferently. "Then it 's high time for us to be at work."

Noah looked at the near-by woods and then again faced the redcoats. One of them was a burly fellow whose face the young soldier was positive he had seen before, though he was not able to recall the place or time. The second man was young, almost as young as he was, Noah thought; while the third was not very greatly to be feared if his actions when he had stopped the "woman" were any standard. And yet he was well aware that his plight was a desperate one and that he must meet it alone.

Suddenly two of the men leaped toward him, one of them calling to the third man as they did so, "This is your chance, Joe. We 'll hold him while you—"

The soldier did not complete his directions, for Noah instantly jumped forward and seized the man by his waist. Before the startled soldier realized that he must defend himself he was lifted from his feet and hurled against

the body of his comrade. Both men fell to the floor, and without delaying to see what the third man would attempt Noah darted through the open door and ran swiftly toward the woods.

Before he gained the shelter he was seeking he heard the shouts of the three men, who had started in pursuit. He expected to hear the report of the pistol and he was running with his head bowed low, hoping somehow to avoid the bullet, but for some reason which he was unable to grasp the weapon was not discharged. The redcoats, however, were in full pursuit, and just as he entered the woods Noah looked for an instant behind him. He had a fleeting glimpse of the men near the house, who had stopped when they heard the shouts of the pursuing redcoats and were watching the race. The three immediate pursuers were running one behind another, and as Noah noticed the difference in the speed they were making he smiled grimly as he darted among the trees.

Without halting he instantly decided that his wisest course for the present was not to go near the place where the two horses were concealed. The danger of losing his way in the unfamiliar region was great, but not so great

as it would be if he should be overtaken by the soldiers. Accordingly, bearing to the right, instead of the left in the direction of the horses, he exerted himself to distance his pursuers. They were no longer shouting for their comrades to come to their aid, but Noah heard the sounds the men made as they came crashing through the woods. His fear, however, was less, now that he was in the midst of the great trees, even if the entire band should join in the chase. He was leading the pursuit away from the place he was most eager to gain, and as the moments passed and he became convinced that his pursuers were not gaining upon him his confidence increased. This time, he thought grimly that he would trust to his speed and not try to find a hiding-place as he once had done. But the pursuit was stubborn. On and still on into the great woods Noah ran, but whenever he stopped a moment to listen he did not fail to hear the sound of snapping branches behind him.

With renewed determination he held to his flight. Even to stop and meet his enemies one at a time was not to be thought of, for they were armed while he was defenseless. His sole hope was in his swiftness. Wearied as he was by his exertions, the knowledge that his

enemies must be as weary as he spurred him forward. He ran till the very trees seemed to be moving about him. The chatter of a frightened gray squirrel that fled at his approach sounded in his ears like a loud cry of warning to his enemies. His breath came in gasps, the muscles of his legs seemed heavy as lead, but still Noah ran on.

He leaped across a brook and staggered as he gained the opposite bank. As he regained his footing, he stopped a moment for breath and to look about him. The sounds of the pursuit had ceased. The silence of the forest almost seemed to the panting young soldier to be vocal. He brushed the wet hair from his forehead and looked about him. A few yards down the stream was a stunted tree, with a long heavy branch reaching across the water. The sight instantly caused Noah to decide to seek a resting-place there. He instantly ran forward ten yards and then swerving from a direct course came back by a circuitous way to the stream. Stepping carefully to avoid leaving any deep footprints on the soft ground, he entered the water, waded down the stream until he came to the tree that seemed to him as if it were extending its thick branches as an invitation. Hastily climbing the trunk he

moved out upon the branch that was above the brook, and at last settled himself among the protecting leaves. He was aware that he was not entirely hidden, but trusting that the redcoats would not be looking for him in the treetops, he drew a long breath of relief and leaned back against the trunk.

A half-hour passed, and as not a sign of his recent pursuers was seen by the watching young soldier, Noah's feeling of relief deepened and he was beginning to think of withdrawing from his hiding-place. As he looked at the sun he saw that it already had passed the meridian. If he was to find the horses and escape he must act soon, he assured himself.

Noah waited until another half-hour passed before he moved. If the band which attended Lord Cornwallis was about to leave the plantation, then the three men who had pursued him into the woods must have abandoned the chase and gone back to rejoin their comrades. If that was true, as the young soldier believed it to be, then he was free to descend and seek the spot where the two horses had been hidden.

Acting upon the suggestion, Noah quickly prepared to leave his place on the branch of the tree, but as he grasped a higher branch he was startled as he heard an exclamation

directly beneath him. Glancing quickly at the ground he was startled when he beheld some one standing near the trunk and looking quietly up at him. How the man had come or how he had gained the place without being seen, Noah was unable to conjecture.

A second glance revealed to the startled boy that the man was an Indian and was alone. The motionless figure was that of the Cherokee whom he had left on the island in the swamp near the home of Major Gibbs.

"Nick, is that you?" Noah called in a low voice.

"Huh," responded the Indian.

Without delay Noah hastily descended, and as he dropped upon the ground he saw that he was face to face with Nick.

"Where are the redcoats? Have they gone?" asked Noah, anxiously glancing about in the woods as he spoke.

The Cherokee nodded his head but did not speak.

"Where is Smart Archie? Is George here? Are you alone?"

"All gone."

"Where did you come from? How is it that you are here?"

"Nick here all day."

"Where is your horse?"

"No horse."

"I know where there is one — that is, if I can find the place. Come, Nick, we 'll try to find it," said Noah, as he cautiously led the way from the brook.

CHAPTER XXIII

CORN-CRIB

THE young soldier and his companion at once departed from the place where they had so unexpectedly met. For a time Noah had no difficulty in retracing the way over which he had come. When he tried to find the secluded spot, however, where the two horses had been concealed, he was unsuccessful. The horses, he knew, had been left not far from the border of the woods, but after a search that lasted an hour or more he could not find a trace of the way.

"It 's strange, Nick," he said at last. "Do you think the redcoats might have found these horses?"

The Cherokee shook his head, but did not otherwise reply.

"I either can't find the place or the horses are gone," continued Noah. "The only thing for us to do is to go back to the house — or, at least, find out if Cornwallis and his men are gone. If they are, and the woman is not harmed, then she may be able to take us to the place

where we hid the horses. Come on, Nick, I am sure I can find the way back to the barn."

The Indian offered no objection, and in a brief time Noah had led his companion to the spot where he had entered the woods in his recent flight. The sight which greeted them as they gazed earnestly at the building at first was somewhat puzzling. The woman who had been Noah's hostess was seen running from the house, and Noah's first thought was that she was attempting to escape from some pursuer. But not a soldier was to be seen about the place. Indeed, the silence that rested over the plantation was almost appalling. Noah watched the woman as she ran to the barn, and then a moment later appeared again running swiftly toward the house. Her actions were puzzling to the young soldier, but he decided to remain where he was without disclosing himself until the true condition of affairs should become clearer. Still the silence was unbroken. Not a sound came from the house, nor did a man appear on the plantation.

The horses which the redcoats had tethered were nowhere to be seen, and convinced at last that the band was gone, Noah turned to his companion and whispered, "I believe the men have gone, Nick. You stay here and I'll make sure."

Noah stealthily ran to the barn, and as soon as he gained it stood for a few minutes in the shelter of the doorway and looked in the direction of the house. Still not a man was seen nor an alarming sound heard, though the woman did not again appear.

Noah's next flight was to the smokehouse, which stood halfway between the barn and house. Peering around the corner of the rude little building, he again looked long and earnestly at the house, and in a few minutes the woman once more came out of the doorway. This time the excited young soldier was fully convinced that she was not afraid, for she did not even look behind her as she walked toward the little building behind which Noah was hiding.

As she drew near, the young soldier called to her in a low voice, and was relieved when he saw her stop and look about her eagerly, plainly not alarmed by his call.

"Here I am — behind the smokehouse," said Noah. "Don't be afraid. It's the man whom you helped. Have the redcoats gone?"

"Yes," replied the woman.

"All of them?"

"Every one."

Noah at once stepped forward, and said:

"Those fellows almost caught me. Have they harmed you?"

"No. Lord Cornwallis protected me. I was not afraid. Two of the men who were the last to go tried to set the house on fire. I put out the fire," she said simply.

"There 's a young Indian here —"

"Where?" interrupted the woman, as she looked quickly about her.

"In the woods. I'll call him. He is a friend —"

"What is he?" broke in the woman again.

"A Cherokee."

"The Cherokees are not friendly."

"Yes, I know, but this one is. I'll vouch for him."

"Where did he come from?"

"He was with some of our men the last time I saw him."

"Why is n't he with them now?"

"I don't know. I have n't had any chance to find out."

"I don't trust him. The Cherokees are with the redcoats."

In spite of his assertion Noah's confidence in a measure was shaken by the woman's positiveness. It was true that he knew little of Nick. The young Indian had saved him when

he had almost fallen upon the venomous moccasin in the swamp. He manifestly had the confidence of the men whom he had met at Major Gibbs's, but he was no longer with them. Why was he alone? How had it come to pass that Nick had appeared in the woods and had discovered the hiding-place of the young soldier? The questions were somewhat troublesome, although Noah was not yet ready to acknowledge that the young Cherokee was not to be trusted.

"Are you expecting to stay here alone?" he inquired, after a brief silence.

"I am — until my husband comes home."

"It is not safe. You have just had a visit from Cornwallis and his men —"

"And they will not return," she broke in. "'Lightning does not strike twice in the same place,' I reckon," she added lightly.

"Yes, but Tories may come or some of Tarleton's dragoons may pay you a visit."

"I am not afraid."

"I must go on right away. Can you take me to the place where we hid our horses? I can't find them."

"They are both in the barn."

"How is that? I was in the barn and did n't see them."

"I went and brought them just as soon as the redcoats left."

"Then I 'll take my horse and start," said Noah, turning away.

His hostess did not protest, and at once re-entered the house. Before Noah went to the barn he summoned Nick from the woods and explained to him that he was to leave the place at once. The Cherokee made no objection as he returned with Noah to the barn, where both horses were found as the woman had explained.

"What will you do now, Nick?" Noah inquired of his companion, while he was placing the bridle on his horse.

"Go to camp."

"Where is Smart Archie?" asked the young soldier sharply, recalling the suspicions of the woman.

"Gone."

"Where?"

"Gone to camp."

"Why aren't you with him?"

The young Cherokee smiled as he said, "Nick here."

"Yes, I know, but how do you happen to be here? I don't understand."

"Nick here."

"Did you know the redcoats were here?"

The Indian nodded but did not speak.

"Then why did you come?"

"Why you come?" retorted Nick. "Throw man hard," he added with a smile.

"Did you see me do that?" asked Noah quickly. "Where were you?" he added, as his companion merely smiled in response to the question.

"Nick see."

"Where are you going now?" again inquired Noah, hopeless of drawing any information from the young Indian which the latter did not choose to impart.

"Go to camp," repeated Nick.

"Which camp?"

Before the young Cherokee could reply there came a prolonged call for help from the house. Startled by the cry, Noah instantly ran to the door of the barn and looked eagerly toward the house. He saw his hostess struggling in the grasp of two men, and without a thought of any peril to himself he instantly began to run in that direction. He had not spoken in response to the call, and so excited were the men with whom the woman was struggling that neither of them heard his approach.

"We know you have some coin in your

house," one of the men was saying, "and you 'll have to give it to us."

The woman had been doing her utmost to defend herself, but she was now overpowered. The men whom Noah instantly recognized as the two Tories who had come to the place before the arrival of Cornwallis and his band, were now dragging the woman toward the house.

"We 'll let you go," one of them was saying, "just as soon as you tell us where the coin is."

"Yes, we 'll help you find it!" said the other man brutally. "We 'll give you a taste of that hickory club that you used on us if you don't — "

The man stopped abruptly as Noah Dare at that moment threw himself upon the contestants, who had been so entirely engrossed in the struggle that they were unaware of the rush of the young soldier. Noah's onslaught was so fierce that the Tory, unable to protect himself, was hurled headlong, and before his startled comrade was able to flee the young soldier had seized and thrown him after his friend.

"Come on, Nick!" shouted Noah, as he darted toward the fallen men. The two Tories, however, gave one look in the direction of the

barn, from which the Cherokee could be seen running swiftly, and instantly leaped to their feet and fled.

With loud calls Noah and his hostess started in pursuit as the men ran toward their horses. Noah's fear that the Tories were armed was dispelled as he saw that neither of them made any attempt to turn upon him. Their eagerness to get to their horses, however, caused him to believe that weapons might have been left in the saddles, and at the thought he increased the speed at which he was running. The woman was not far behind him, the sleeves of her dress torn, and her hair hanging down her back, but her fear of the men who had attacked her seemed to have departed.

The young soldier arrived at the place where the horses were tied before either of the Tories could free his horse. Instantly shouting to his companions, Noah tore loose the strap by which the horses were fastened to the rail and slapping each upon its flank shouted in his loudest voice at the frightened animals, one of which fled toward the barn, while its companion ran wildly up the lane that led to the road.

By this time the young Cherokee had arrived upon the scene, and as he came near, both Tories turned and ran at their utmost speed into the

lane. As they departed, Noah called loudly after them, though he did not follow.

"Get the horse, Nick!" called Noah, as he turned to the woman. "Are you hurt?" he inquired.

"No," she replied sharply.

"Then I'll help Nick get that horse," said Noah, as he instantly ran toward the barn where the Indian was vainly attempting to seize the frightened animal by its bridle. In a brief time the horse was secured and led within the barn, where Nick was left to watch while Noah hastily returned to the house whither the woman had preceded him.

"Will you still plan to stay here alone?" asked Noah as he entered.

"What can I do? When my husband returns and finds that I am not here, he will be alarmed. The redcoats have left two of the rifles and I shall be able to defend myself."

"You ought not to go out of the house."

"I shall not."

"Will you keep the doors barred?"

"Yes, but the black mare will have to be looked after."

"Will she go away if you turn her into the woods?"

"I don't know. I reckon she'd stay — unless

some more Tories came along. They must have known Cornwallis was gone."

"Yes. If you have any coin, you 'd better hide it before they come again."

"It is hidden."

"Good. Nick and I will start now before these fellows get some of their friends and come back. I don't like to leave you here alone."

"My husband may come any time. I am not afraid."

"Then I'll give Nick the horse I rode and I'll take Corn-Crib—"

"Take what?"

"Corn-Crib," laughed Noah. "That 's the name I'm going to give the Tory's horse. I'm going to take that horse."

"And the Cherokee, too?"

"Yes."

"I'm afraid you won't be as safe with him as I shall be here alone with the doors barred."

Noah, vaguely troubled by the suggestion, did not reply. Stepping outside the house he looked eagerly in all directions, but the recent visitors were nowhere in sight. Convinced that they were gone, Noah ran to the barn to summon Nick and prepare for an immediate departure from the plantation.

CHAPTER XXIV

A REUNION

In a brief time the two horses were saddled, and Noah Dare and his companion mounted and rode into the yard. Halting a moment in front of the house where his recent hostess was standing, an interested observer of all that was occurring, the young soldier said to her:

"I am grateful to you for all that you have done for me."

"I am the one to be grateful," said the woman quietly. "I want you to take this rifle," she added, as she handed a gun to Noah. "For some reason Lord Cornwallis did not see fit to take away my guns. I have a bullet-pouch and powder-horn for you, too," she added, as she handed him the quaint implements. "I am sorry I can't feed you before you go."

"If we are successful we shall be all right," responded Noah lightly, as he thanked his hostess for her kindness.

"Doubtless," she said dryly. "I sincerely wish you success, but you will be in danger every minute until you arrive at the camp."

"Is there no place where you can go?"

"There is no place to which I will go. I shall stay here until my husband comes for me."

"I don't even know your name," suggested Noah.

"Nor do I know yours. Perhaps it is better so —"

"But if I chance to meet your husband," broke in the young soldier.

"Even then 't is better not to know too much."

"If there is no more to be done, then we'll start now."

"Be careful," warned the woman, as she came closer to Noah and spoke in a low voice. "I don't trust the Cherokee."

Noah did not reply to the suggestion. He glanced at Nick, whose horse was standing near. The young Indian apparently was not heeding the conversation, and if he was impatient to be gone he did not betray his feeling by anything in his bearing.

Could the man be trusted? Noah asked the question of himself seriously, for the sincerity of the woman was not to be doubted. He knew but little of Nick, and the Cherokee had repeatedly failed to explain how he chanced to

be in the woods when Noah was seeking to escape from the soldiers of Cornwallis. It was too late, however, to change his plans now, he assured himself, even if he desired to do so. Nick had assured him that he was familiar with the region and could lead him to the army which the young soldier was eager to find.

Deciding that he would be cautious, Noah again bade his hostess good-by, called to the Cherokee, and in a brief time both were in the road, where the plantation could no longer be seen. As he looked at his companion Noah saw that Nick was keenly observant of his way. His eyes were shining and his restlessness became more manifest as they proceeded. Still nothing had been seen to alarm them, and in spite of Noah's ignorance of his way a feeling of increasing confidence crept over him.

At noontime Nick led the way into the woods, where a rest was given the horses, while a lean rabbit which the Indian shot with his bow and arrow was roasted over a fire which was extinguished as soon as the dinner was prepared. Meanwhile the two horses were permitted to browse on the scanty grass that grew on the bank of the little stream near which the halt was made.

"Do you expect to meet Smart Archie?"

inquired Noah, as he prepared to resume his journey.

Nick nodded his head and smiled, though he did not speak.

"Where?"

The Indian smiled and pointed in the direction which they were to follow.

"Nick, why are you on the side of the colonies?"

"Huh!" grunted the Cherokee.

"All the rest of your tribe are with the redcoats," suggested Noah. "Why are you with us?" he added, as the young Indian did not explain.

Nor did Nick inform his companion of the reasons which had caused him to leave his tribe. Had he really left them? Despite Noah's efforts to assure himself that he had no cause for fear, he was not able entirely to conceal his anxiety. In a strange country, following a guide of whose fidelity he knew almost nothing, and with the warning which his recent hostess had given him still fresh in his mind, the young soldier's determination to be watchful increased when the horses were mounted and the ride resumed.

When two hours had passed and the horses, which had been poorly fed, were beginning to

show signs of distress, Noah suggested that a rest should be given the weary animals. Night was not far distant and the young soldier was beginning to be anxious. Several ruined plantations had been passed, and though none of the redcoats had been seen nor had any signs of treachery been detected in his companion, Noah was vaguely uneasy. The night would be a time when his difficulties would be greatly increased. At last, unable longer to bear the suspense, he made a suggestion to Nick that they should halt, ostensibly to give the horses a breathing-spell.

The Cherokee silently acquiesced, and soon after, when the two riders saw before them a deserted hut, not far back from the road, they sought its shelter, concealing their horses among the trees in the rear of the cabin.

A thorough search of the place failed to reveal food for men or horses. The Indian accepted the result indifferently, but Noah's feeling of nervousness increased. Without feeding, the horses would be unable to carry the men much farther on their way.

"How far is it now to Lafayette's camp?" asked Noah.

Nick shook his head as if he was unable to say.

"Sure you know your way?" again the young soldier asked.

The Cherokee solemnly nodded his head, but his action did not relieve his companion's fears.

"When were you here, Nick?" he inquired.

Again the Indian failed to explain, and Noah's anxiety became still greater.

"Can we get anything to eat before we come to the camp?" he inquired.

Nick smiled, somewhat scornfully, Noah thought, as he replied, "May be. No can tell. Hungry?" he asked.

"Yes—hungry and tired. I'd feel better if I was sure—"

Noah stopped abruptly as loud shouts and cries of anger suddenly were heard from the road, which was not more than fifty feet distant from the cabin in which he and Nick were standing. Darting to the door he looked excitedly toward the place from which the sounds were heard, and saw a body of a dozen or more men engaged in a combat of some kind. A second glance revealed the presence of several scarlet-clad men, and Noah instantly concluded that a contest of some kind between the redcoats and the men of the vicinity was being waged. Seizing his rifle and looking quickly

to the priming, he ran swiftly toward the struggling men, shouting as he ran.

The sight of men approaching from the woods instantly caused the redcoats to turn and flee. Already hardly beset by their enemies, at the sight of reinforcements, of whose numbers they were of course ignorant, the soldiers at once broke for the woods on the opposite side of the road. Before Noah arrived on the scene all but two had disappeared from sight, one of whom was being roughly handled by one of the struggling contestants, while his comrade was seized by two others and securely held. Noah's surprise was intense when he recognized the man who was maltreating the former as Duncan. Another hasty glance revealed Smart Archie and George in the company, and Noah instantly was aware that he had overtaken his recent companions.

"I willna!" roared Duncan, when Smart Archie commanded him to desist. "I willna! Th' mon shall dance! I'll ha' heem hoppin' up an' down th' road. I did it m'self once an' I'll no forget it."

The young Scotchman's face was livid with rage, and whatever may have been his companions' former doubts concerning his courage they were all dispelled by his actions now.

"L-let g-go, ye h-h-h—" joined in George, unable to complete his order, but seizing the infuriated Scotchman by the shoulders and flinging him to the ground.

Angered anew by the assault, Duncan leaped to his feet and turned savagely upon George. "I reck'n I'll no be treated like that!" he shouted, as he tried to seize his agile assailant.

But Smart Archie suddenly extended his foot, and as Duncan stumbled over it he pushed him violently and the angry young Scotchman again was thrown heavily upon the ground. When he once more stood erect, he found himself facing three of his determined comrades, and his rage quickly subsided.

"I reck'n that is na way t' treat a mon!" he said sullenly. "I didna let my mon get free," he added, as he glared at the soldier whom he had attacked. "I wasna afeered o' heem. An' what for did ye try t' let heem go free like th' rist o' th' redcoats?"

"Calm yourself, Duncan," said Smart Archie quietly. "We're lucky to be free ourselves. You came in the nick of time," he added, turning to Noah as he spoke.

"Was any one hurt?" asked Noah.

"Not seriously. They were trying to take

us. You see we were just coming out of the woods and they must have seen us. They hid in the brush and made a rush upon us as we passed. They almost had us, too. Where did you come from?"

"Nick and I were in that cabin," replied Noah, as he pointed to the hut where he and the Cherokee had stopped. "Won't the redcoats come back?" he added, as he looked keenly into the woods whither the soldiers had fled.

"No man knows, though I don't believe they will."

"Come to the cabin," suggested Noah. "We 'll be safer there."

All the men at once followed the young soldier, and as soon as two of the number (for there were three in the band whom Noah had not seen before) had been stationed as guards, the others entered the house and seated themselves on the earthen floor, glad of the opportunity for a brief rest.

"Where 's Nick?" asked Smart Archie, as he looked about him for the Cherokee.

"I left him with the horses in the woods behind the house," said Noah, as he hastily arose, and stepping to the rear looked about for the young Indian. "He isn't here, at

least he isn't where I left him," he said to Smart Archie, as the latter joined him.

"That 's strange. He may have taken the horses farther back among the trees."

"Or taken them away," suggested Noah.

"No, I don't think Nick would do that."

"I am not as sure as you are. I was warned against him."

"Who warned you?"

"A woman."

"Did she know Nick?"

"Yes, I think she did."

"Major Gibbs seemed very sure of him."

"Where is the major?"

"I don't know. Probably he 's with the Marquis by this time. Come on, Noah, we 'll look about us. It is n't quite fair to Nick even to suspect him of stealing the horses."

A search of the immediate vicinity, however, failed to reveal either Nick or the missing animals. Perplexed as Smart Archie was, when he and Noah at last abandoned their search and started back toward the hut, he yet was unwilling to admit even the possibility that the young Cherokee had taken the horses and fled from the place.

"We'll hear from him soon," he declared, when he and Noah entered the cabin.

"Where are your horses?" Noah asked.

"We had only two and we let the major have them," replied Smart Archie.

"You see," he added, "he had word that Lord Cornwallis was to meet Tarleton somewhere near and —"

"He did; at least he was in the house of that woman who warned me against Nick. I saw him myself."

The interest of the little band was at once aroused, and Noah was obliged to relate a part of his recent experiences. He did not refer to his encounter with the champion wrestler among the men whom Cornwallis had with him, but his description of the use which his hostess had made of her hickory club in beating off the two marauding Tories at once aroused the enthusiasm of his hearers.

"T-that w-woman o-ought t-t-to b-be made a c-c-captain in t-the Continental l-l-line," declared George.

"She'd do better as a captain in the hickory-club brigade," laughed Smart Archie. "There are enough women in North Carolina and Virginia like her to form a regiment."

"Just now I'm more interested in the army of the Marquis," said Noah. "How are we going to get around the redcoats? They must

be near here, and they're between us and Lafayette's army, I understand."

"Yes, we'll fix that all right, I reckon," said Smart Archie. "Just now —"

The young leader stopped abruptly as at that moment a loud and prolonged cry was heard that instantly brought every man in the hut to his feet.

CHAPTER XXV

A STARTLING TRANSFORMATION

THE cry was followed by shouts and calls and the report of guns, that plainly indicated that a contest of some kind was taking place in the road. Instantly every man in the hut leaped for his weapon, but as the little band rushed for the exit they saw that the woods about them apparently were filled with shouting, running men and the noise of the firing increased. Confusion was on every side, and friend and foe were strangely mingled in the deepening dusk.

"It 's every man for himself!" said Smart Archie sharply. "Break for the woods!"

Instantly every one in the hut darted from his shelter and ran swiftly toward the denser part of the woods beyond them. Noah was running as were the others, although he did not understand just what the source of the trouble was. As he looked back he saw that a large body of redcoats was in pursuit, and though it was impossible for him to discern the faces or garb of the fleeing men, he had

no difficulty in deciding that a small body of patriots had been attacked in the road by a large body of the soldiers of Cornwallis and that they had fled to the woods for shelter.

The shouts and shots were increasing in volume, and the young soldier was aware that his hope of safety depended largely upon the swiftness of his flight. Bounding from hummock to hummock, leaping over the logs, dodging from tree to tree, Noah ran rapidly. Unfamiliar with the region, every man unmindful of everything except his own safety, it was not long before Noah was separated from his companions, though his speed was not slackened when he realized that he was running alone. The sounds of the pursuit soon became fainter and the shots were less frequent now, but the young soldier still ran at his utmost speed.

At last, convinced that either he had distanced the pursuers or that the chase had been abandoned when the patriots had scattered in their flight, he halted and listened intently. Silence had returned and the great forest was still. And he was alone; for, though he looked intently all about him, he was not able to discover the presence of friend or foe. Breathless from his flight and still somewhat

uncertain, he remained where he was until a half-hour had passed. Not a sound was heard to alarm him. The twilight had passed and the night was at hand. To all appearances no one was seeking him and he was alone in the woods.

Noah for the first time became aware that he had lost his sense of direction. Confused by the many dodgings and turnings he had made in his flight, he was uncertain even of the way back to the road. He turned and tried to discover in which direction the wind was blowing, but not a leaf was stirring. The wind had died away, and the night air was oppressively warm.

To remain where he was, however, was not to be thought of, he decided; but to try to make his way back to the road would be to encounter certain danger. It was plain to the young soldier that the road near the hut was not far from the main body of the redcoats. Only in this way were the two contests to be accounted for. In each instance doubtless a small body of the patriots, trying as he had been to make their way to Fredericksburg, there to join the force of Lafayette, had been unaware of the nearness of the redcoats and each band had been nearly taken.

The army of the Marquis must lie somewhere to the north, Noah concluded after he had thought carefully of the matter. He looked up into the sky for the north star, but the thin clouds hid it from sight. Apparently there was nothing by which he could take his bearings. The danger of losing his way in the night was great, but the peril of remaining in the forest seemed greater to the young soldier. It was probable, he thought, that the redcoats in the attacking party might renew their search for the fleeing patriots as soon as daylight came. In that event his prospect of escape was brighter if he should depart, even if his way was completely lost in his wanderings in the night.

Wearied by the exertions of the day, hungry and thirsty, the young soldier did not falter when he had made his decision. Grasping his rifle to which he had held fast throughout his flight, he turned to what he thought must be the north and at once resolutely started on his way. Noah Dare was not without his experiences in the woods, and he had slight fear of walking in a circle and of unconsciously returning to the place from which he had started — a danger which those less familiar than he with the forests were likely to

incur. His chief peril lay in his ignorance of the direction in which he ought to move and of the exact location of the camp he was seeking. However, undeterred by his fears, he steadily held to his course, stopping only to make certain that he was not wandering from the direction he had decided to follow before he had started.

Noah had been gone about two hours, as nearly as he was able to estimate the time, when he suddenly saw before him the waters of a broad stream. Was this the Rappahannock? The question was startling in its suggestiveness to the wearied young soldier. If his surmise was correct, then he was not far from Fredericksburg and the camp of Lafayette. But even if the river was indeed the Rappahannock, in which direction was he to go in order to arrive at the little town? Was he above it or below it? Must he go up or down the bank?

Puzzled by his uncertainty, Noah stood for several minutes on the shore looking over the fearful waters. He could not now be far from his friends he thought, but the very nearness also implied an increased peril, for Cornwallis and his army also were not far away. What ought he to do?

In the midst of his uncertainty, Noah was startled as he saw what at first he thought was a huge floating log moving steadily downstream and approaching the place where he was standing. A second glance, however, revealed the fact that it was a large canoe or dugout which was coming, and not a log at all. In the bow he saw a man paddling silently, while a second man at that moment became visible in the stern of the dugout. The second man must have been lying on the bottom of the canoe, and had sat up as his comrade spoke to him in a low voice.

The men were within five yards of Noah now. The young soldier was partly concealed by the bushes on the bank of the river, although he himself could see without being seen.

"Yaas, suh. 'Bout fo' mile," the man in the bow was saying.

Startled by the sound, Noah quickly stepped a little nearer the water. The voice was that of Samson, the huge negro whom he had first seen on the island in the swamp on Major Gibbs's plantation.

Without disclosing himself Noah instantly called, "Samson! Samson! Is that you?"

"Who dat? Who dat?" exclaimed the startled black as he stopped paddling and, terrified,

"WHO DAT? WHO DAT?"

looked toward the bushes from which the unexpected hail had come. At another time Noah would have laughed at the alarm of the negro, but he was too intent upon securing his help now, if the man really was Samson, to give any heed to such a feeling.

"Samson, is that you?" he called again in a low voice.

"Wha' yo' all wan' er Samson?"

"Come ashore. I want to speak to you."

"No, suh! No, suh! Ah caint do dat, suh. Hit 's des —"

"I have a gun, Samson. Do what I tell you," broke in Noah. "I am a friend; I don't want to harm you, but if you don't do what I tell you I 'll not answer for the consequences."

The huge negro's teeth were chattering, and his terror was also manifest in his speech. "Ah des mus' know who yo' all be, suh," he stammered.

"Come ashore and I 'll tell you."

There was a brief whispered conversation between the two men in the dugout before Samson said, "Yaas, suh."

The lumbering craft was turned toward the bank and the man in the stern was holding a rifle in his hands.

"Samson, do you know me now?" inquired Noah, as the canoe grounded.

"No, suh. Ah des caint say's Ah knows yo'," replied the black man, as he peered at Noah in the darkness.

"Don't you remember me? You saw me on the island —"

"He's shore all right," suddenly exclaimed the man in the stern.

Noah saw that he too was black, but as he was manifestly a stranger he gave him slight heed. His chief task was to convince Samson, for by this time he was fully convinced that the black was the huge slave of Major Gibbs.

"Yaas, suh," said Samson dubiously.

"You are going to the camp of the Marquis."

"How come yo' all know dat?"

"I want you to take me with you."

"Yaas, suh. We all'll shorely take yo'," abruptly said the second negro.

"De dugout ain' so berry big —" began Samson dubiously.

"Get abo'd, suh," said the second black man, apparently ignoring his companion's hesitation. "We all'll shorely tak' Noah Dare."

Alarmed, as well as astonished, as he heard his name spoken by the negro, the young soldier stared at the black man, uncertain whether

to accept the invitation or to flee from the spot. Noah was positive that he had never before seen the man. Even the dim light could not conceal the fact that the negro was a stranger to him. But the man had recognized him and called him by his name. Was he a friend or foe?

"Get abo'd, suh," the negro called again. "Ah reckin yo' all is des 's much fo' gettin' toe the camp 's we uns is."

"Which camp?" asked Noah hastily.

The negro laughed as he replied, "Dey ain' but one camp Ah reckin, wha' Noah Dare done wan' toe mak'."

"Are you going directly to the camp of the Marquis?"

"Ah reckin we is, Noah Dare. If we uns done try toe tote yo' all toe de camp er de redcoats, we 'd sholy get treated lak' de way dat sojer ob de Lor' Cornwallis gets treated when Noah Dare done fling him toe de odder side ob de yard."

"What do you mean? Where was that?" demanded Noah, advancing a step nearer the dugout and looking keenly into the face of the negro.

Who was this black man? And how did he know of the deeds of the young soldier?

Mystified by the evident knowledge the negro possessed, Noah was less fearful now. The presence of Samson in the canoe was a source of some comfort, for the huge black plainly had been implicitly trusted by the men on the island in the swamp. The reference to Lafayette's camp also was reassuring. To remain where he was then was not to be thought of. Noah was aware that somehow the river must be crossed, and he had no means of his own by which the opposite shore could be gained. The decision was instantly made, and stepping into the water Noah advanced to the dugout.

"We'll do our best for you, but you'll have to take the same chance that we do," said the black in the stern of the canoe.

"Who are you?" asked Noah, startled afresh by the change in the man's manner of speech. The negro dialect had disappeared and the black was speaking in the voice and manner of a white man.

"Never mind that now," said the man impatiently. "Some day you may know and then again you may not. If you want to go to the camp of the Marquis, stretch yourself on the bottom of this dugout. Even then we'll not promise you a safe arrival. If you prefer you

may stay here and let the redcoats make a target of you."

"Who are you?" again Noah demanded.

"Samson, this young fool apparently does n't want to go with us," said the black, turning to his huge companion. "We can't stay here till daylight — "

"I'm coming," interrupted Noah, as he hastily boarded the canoe and quickly stretched himself on the bottom.

He placed his rifle by his side, prepared for any emergency. His confusion of mind was still great when he felt the motion of the dugout as the powerful negro resumed his labors.

There were times when the canoe was allowed to drift and Noah saw both of his companions crouching low. The dugout was not unlike a large floating tree in its appearance, and the young soldier required no explanation to enable him to understand that at such times there was peril to be avoided. Not even a whispered word was spoken. Once Noah was confident that he heard the voices of men not far away, and startled by the sound he almost arose to a sitting posture, but the savage grasp of his arm by Samson instantly caused him to resume his former position.

There also were times when the powerful

negro exerted all his strength and the clumsy craft was driven swiftly with the current. Doubtless the threatening danger of discovery had passed or the presence of the enemy was less to be feared, Noah thought. But, alternately paddling and drifting, the night at last passed, and as the first streaks of the dawn appeared, Noah turned to watch the mysterious negro in the stern of the canoe. The light was still faint, but Noah could see sufficiently well to convince him that he never before had seen the black. Who was he? How had he obtained his knowledge? The question was still unanswered as the dugout at that moment was run under the shelter of some bushes overhanging the bank. The puzzling negro now became still more puzzling. Quickly he removed a wig from his head, and his hair was seen to be red! Next he began vigorously to wash his face and hands, from which the black speedily disappeared. In astonishment Noah watched the transformation, and a low exclamation escaped his lips as he recognized the man and called him by his name.

CHAPTER XXVI

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

"MORGAN!" exclaimed Noah in a low voice, as he looked steadily at the spy.

"Hush!" said the man, glancing fearfully about him as he spoke. "Remember the very bushes may have ears."

"Why are you doing that? What makes you change —"

"Don't speak above a whisper," broke in the spy.

Noah had been speaking in very low tones, but as he was aware of the peril that threatened them all because of the presence of the spy, he ignored the rebuke and said, "Are you not going on?"

"No," whispered Morgan.

"Why not?"

"Because I have met you. I at first thought I would go, but you can take my message to the Marquis."

"If I ever see him," said Noah, somewhat despondently.

The young soldier was so nearly worn out

by his recent experiences that his usual spirit of hopefulness for the moment seemed to have failed him.

"Samson will take you to the camp," said Morgan quietly. "You will be all right as soon as you are among friends again. Now, listen. Tell the Marquis that Cornwallis intends to attack him. He has been rallying all the forces he could muster and has looked after all the details himself. He is a marvel, the man is!"

"How did you find a place with him?"

"I am a 'deserter.' I felt as Benedict Arnold — let his name rot! — felt. I have n't been treated fairly by the Continentals. I don't believe the colonies can maintain their fight much longer. I am eager to get the land the redcoats have promised to give every man who will come over to their side."

"I see," said Noah, as he thoughtfully looked into the face of the spy. "Did you have any trouble in making the earl believe your lie?"

"Not a bit."

"How did you do it?"

"I was with the Bloody Scout. You saw me —".

"Yes," interrupted Noah. "I saw you first

at that auction. I thought then that you surely were an Englishman just as much as a few minutes ago I would have sworn that you were a negro."

Morgan smiled and said, "Cornwallis was looking for recruits, and it does not take very much to persuade a man to believe, when he wants to believe, just what you are telling him."

"Is n't he suspicious of you?"

"I think not."

"Any of the men suspect?"

"That I cannot say. I may be recognized any moment," said the spy quietly. "That is one of the chances I must take."

"Yes."

"I must not stay here any longer. Samson will take you across the river, and then show you the way or go with you to the camp of the Marquis. Tell the brave young Frenchman that Cornwallis is hot on his trail and is receiving reinforcements all the time. The Tories are busy, and what they can't do the redcoats can. Lord Cornwallis has been taking horses and supplies from the men who refused to sell to General Greene. Think of that when you are telling your story!"

"How many men has Cornwallis?"

"About five thousand — veterans."

"Do you know how many Lafayette has?"

"There are not more than three thousand — unless he has had more come to him within three days. I don't think he has."

"Then he must move on?"

"That is for him to decide."

"You think he ought to?"

"I am sure it is his only chance. Cornwallis will get him if he tries to fight. The odds are all against him. He has n't a chance."

"Shall I tell him what you think?"

"Not unless he asks you," replied Morgan quietly. "He sent me to find out conditions, not to plan his campaign for him. I must be going now, for I 'm a redcoat once more, and if I am caught talking to a rebel I shall have more troubles; and I have a plenty as it is."

"Do you know what became of Nick and the two horses?"

"Who is Nick? What two horses?"

"Nick is a young Cherokee —"

"The Cherokees are with the redcoats."

"Yes, I know, but Major Gibbs seemed to trust this fellow. He helped me to get away the last time you saw me. And we had two horses."

"I have n't seen or heard anything of him.

I'll keep my eyes open now that you have told me. I must be going. Give my message just as I have given it to you. Good luck be yours. Good-by."

The spy had hardly ceased speaking when he stepped ashore and disappeared among the bushes and low trees on the bank.

"Now, Samson," said Noah, turning to the huge black man, "we must make our best time for the camp. You're sure you know the way, are n't you?"

"Yaas, suh," replied Samson, grinning as he spoke.

Taking his paddle, the negro at once began to ply it and the awkward craft was headed for the opposite shore. The fears of the young soldier were keen now, for the responsibility which had been placed upon him as the bearer of Morgan's message increased his feeling of anxiety. There were many questions which he had wanted to ask the spy, but Morgan's fear of discovery had been understood and shared by Noah and time was an important element in the problem of each.

Nervously the young soldier watched the shore which they were slowly leaving behind them. The dugout was being driven steadily across the river, but of necessity its progress

was exceedingly slow. The fact that Samson also was keenly watching the woods they were leaving behind them did not calm Noah's fears. At any moment he feared he might hear the report of guns or a loud shout that would indicate that Morgan had been taken, and the recent interview had not been as secret as the spy had believed it to be.

Slowly, steadily, the dugout was crossing the stream. Samson paddled in a manner which plainly indicated that he was not exerting all his strength. Noah's anxiety increased with every passing moment, despite the fact that every rod passed brought safety nearer. At last, after what seemed to the young soldier a long time, the rude canoe was within three yards of the longed-for shore, and in his impatience the young soldier arose, took his gun in his hand, and prepared to leap.

"No, suh! No, suh!" warned Samson sharply. "Not yet, suh."

"Why not? What are we going to do now?"

"Des drif'."

"But we must make the camp!" protested Noah. "I have n't any time to lose."

"Da 's hit, suh. We all cain' lose no time, suh."

"Then why do you drift? Why don't you paddle or go ashore where we can strike out across the country?"

Samson had slipped down into the dugout until only his head appeared above the gunwale, and as Noah saw that the negro was acting in accordance with some plan he had formed, the young soldier followed his example, although he did so unwillingly.

For a time the canoe drifted slowly along the shore. The sun by this time was high above the horizon and the day promised to be exceedingly warm. What little breeze there was brought slight relief from the heat, for the woods served as a break to the wind. Sweltering, Noah did his utmost to be quiet and await Samson's further actions. Morgan manifestly had trusted the negro, and that fact of itself was sufficient warrant for the young soldier to exercise patience.

Apparently the negro did not fear any danger from men concealed among the trees on the shore along which the canoe was drifting. His keenest watch was for indications of discovery from the shore which had been left behind. As more than an hour had elapsed since Morgan had departed, Noah's immediate fears for the spy were somewhat relieved.

He recalled the man's confidence in his ability to reënter the camp of the redcoats without any danger of discovery, and strove to be content.

"Samson," he inquired at last, speaking in a low voice, "did Nick leave that island in the swamp when you did?"

"No, suh."

"When did he go?"

"I reck'n hit was d'reckly after yo' all lef', suh."

"After *I* left? Why did he go then?"

"He done reck'n yo' all might — "

Samson stopped abruptly as he saw something on the near-by shore which manifestly interested him. Noah looked quickly in the direction in which the negro was gazing, but he was not able to see any cause for his companion's interest.

"What is it, Samson?" whispered Noah at last, as the black man continued to gaze steadily at the point on the shore.

The negro did not reply and Noah became silent as he excitedly watched the place. Suddenly he discerned the body of a man standing close to the trunk of a huge tree that was growing on the little point of land that projected a few yards into the river. In a moment

a second man appeared advancing to the side of the one whom Noah had seen at first. The meaning of Samson's interest was at once clear, and Noah Dare was as excited by the discovery as the negro. Still Samson did not change his attitude, nor did he appear to be unduly alarmed. The interest and excitement of the young soldier now were intense, and he drew his rifle to his feet as he sat erect and waited for the canoe to approach the place where the two men were standing, both plainly being deeply interested in the coming of the dugout.

A moment later, Noah Dare, unmindful of the danger of upsetting the dugout, stood erect and wildly waved his arms at one of the men on the shore. Samson, repressing the exclamation of anger that rose to his lips, stared in astonishment at his companion. His surprise increased when he turned to look at the waiting men, for one of them now also was waving his hat and dancing about like a man bereft of his reason.

Without waiting for Samson to land, Noah sprang into the water, his rifle still tightly held in his hand, and waded swiftly to the shore. The man on the bank was as excited as he, and before Noah had left the water

his arms were thrown about the young soldier's neck and the eyes of both were shining.

"Noah Dare!" exclaimed the tall lank man who greeted him. "Is it really you or are you playing ghosts as you did when we burned the tea in Greenwich?" [1]

"No ghost this time," replied Noah.

Turning to the negro and the soldier who were looking on in amazement at the scene, he explained, "This is my Cousin Joseph of Chester. He belonged to Mad Anthony's company there before the war began. I haven't seen him for more than a year. How are you, Joe?" he added, turning once more to his cousin.

"Still able to sing 'Yankee Doodle,'" replied Joseph, smiling, though his eyes were still wet.

"Where did you come from?"

"We started from York."

"Who started?"

"Mad Anthony and eight hundred of the Pennsylvania line."

"And you have just come?"

"Two days ago."

"Is Mad Anthony here?"

[1] See *The Camp-Fire of Mad Anthony.*

"He is. You 'll know it as soon as you get into the camp."

"Have you had any word from my father and mother?"

"Not since we left York."

"What did you hear there?"

"They were well, though both were terribly anxious about you. They had had word only twice after you were sent South to Light Horse Harry's legion. That is the hardest thing to bear in the whole war, for I think the people at home who can't get any word about their boys are worse off than we are in the camps."

"Yes," assented Noah in a low voice; "that's so, especially when you stop to think that the most of the soldiers are only boys."

"How do you happen to be here, Noah?" asked Joseph. "I was sent with this man," he explained, indicating his companion, "to meet a negro that was to come. The negro is here all right, but what I can't understand is how you — Noah Dare — are here, too. Explain yourself!"

Noah was silent a moment. It was plain to him that Morgan must have sent word somehow of his coming and that he was to be disguised as a negro. Samson fitted the de-

scription, and, convinced that the spy had decided not to come after he had met a friend to whom he intrusted his message, Noah concluded not to refer to the man nor explain in full how he had been in the dugout with the black man.

"How far away is the camp?" he asked quietly.

"Only a little way."

"Come on then. We 'll talk on our way."

CHAPTER XXVII

MAD ANTHONY'S WELCOME

Noah looked back and saw that Samson was following with the soldier who had been Joseph's companion, and, aware as he was that the negro was believed to be the man who was to be met, he willingly continued with his cousin, each asking the other many questions as they proceeded. The story of the revolt of the Pennsylvania men and the part which Mad Anthony had had in quelling the insurrection interested the young soldier deeply.

"I did n't have anything to do with it myself," explained Joseph, "but I 'm telling you, Noah, that I felt sorry for the men. Some of them have families, and it 's hard enough to leave children without any one to protect them without having the Congress shut off their pay, too. You see the men had n't been paid for months, and when they came to believe that the Congress did n't care whether they were paid or not, why the men went wild! They were thinking of their families at home. At last they could n't stand it any longer,

and so they just got together and said it was either pay or leaving the army. Poor chaps! They were not complaining so much about what they had to go through as they were that their wives and children should be made to suffer. One couldn't say so out loud, but he felt it deep down in his heart."

"And yet General Washington does n't receive any pay," suggested Noah.

"That's all true, but his family isn't suffering."

"How about General Greene? He has five children and no money. His little wife was in Valley Forge with us. You remember that, don't you?"

"Do I remember her! Well, I reckon I do. Many is the time I saw her carrying right through the snow something she had herself prepared for a sick soldier. She was a jewel!"

"Yes, and General Knox's wife was another woman who was willing to do her part. You never heard a whimper from her, not even when matters looked worst in the camp."

"I know it. Everything you say is true, but you must not forget that the rank and file did not have what some of the officers had."

"What's that?"

"Brains."

"Well, I haven't much sympathy with the revolt."

"You didn't see the men."

"It's all settled now, isn't it?"

"Yes, but it wouldn't have been if Mad Anthony hadn't been on hand. He begged and pleaded with the men and was almost beside himself. Why, Noah, he cried like a baby when he talked to the soldiers. They were moved, too, not so much by what he said to them as by what they all knew he himself was willing to do. He ordered them to stop; he pleaded with them not to fail now, and the worst of it all was that at that very time he knew that General Clinton had some of his own men in our camp pushing the soldiers on. Oh, it was a hard time, but it's all settled now."

"Were the men paid?"

"Only in part. They had promises from the Congress, though. Do you know I more than half-believe that the Congress just loves to talk a good bit more than it does to do things?"

"How many men has Mad Anthony now?"

"About eight hundred."

"Can he depend upon them?"

"To the last man. The enthusiasm has been growing ever since we left York. When we came to Head of Elk the men were wilder to go on than they were for anything else. Since we've joined the Marquis, the feeling is still hotter. I tell you, Noah Dare, that Mad Anthony's men will give a good account of themselves before the summer is over."

"Of course they will. Joe, were you with them when they took Stony Point?"

"Was I with them!" exclaimed Joseph. "Look at that!" he added, pointing to a deep scar on the palm of his right hand.

"How did you get that?"

"I never knew. I didn't know I had it till we were in Stony Point. I reckon I must have grabbed at a sword or something! Oh, but that was a wild rush! The men clambered up the sides of that rocky point as if they were goats. And they kept on, too! Before the redcoats fairly got their eyes open, we were right among them, though I will say that they gave a good account of themselves."

"Why didn't you hold the fort? What made you give it up?"

"It was n't worth trying to hold — at least, it would have been foolish to try to hold it. You know Mad Anthony was hit in the head

by a musket ball when we began the attack. It was dark —"

"No!" exclaimed Noah. "I didn't hear that. Was his wound a bad one?"

"No; the bullet glanced off, but it knocked the general to the ground. But if it had killed him, I believe he would have kept right on, for he wouldn't have known he was dead. He jumped up and shouted, 'March on.' Then he turned to his aides and said, 'Help me into the fort! Let me die at the head of my column.'"

"Did they march on?"

"They marched on," said Joseph dryly.

"Why don't you tell me about it?" said Noah impatiently.

Joseph smiled as he looked down upon his cousin. "You've changed, Noah, since we burned the tea.[1] You had more patience then than you have now."

"I haven't had anything to eat. That's one trouble. Go on with your story."

"Well, the first thing we knew we were right in the middle of the camp of the redcoats. That Frenchman, Fleury, was with us, and he was as quick as a cat. We drove the men from the guns on the breastworks, and

[1] See *The Camp-Fire of Mad Anthony.*

before the rest of the redcoats fairly had their eyes open we were at work. Some of our men began to yell — you could have heard them from Verplanck's Point to Dunderberg — 'The fort is ours! The fort 's our own!' Just then Butler's men came in over the breastworks on the north side of the fort, and they began to yell in response. There was an awful fight for a little while — it was hand-to-hand and every man for himself. It was n't long, however, before scores of the redcoats threw away their guns and kneeling down began to beg, 'Mercy! Mercy, dear Americans! Quarter! Quarter!' You could hear the calls and cries from every side. Oh, it was wonderful, Noah! I wish you had been there."

"I could n't be in two places at the same time," replied Noah. "Go on!"

"Well, sir, the fighting stopped just as soon as the word was given. It was almost like clockwork. The British flag was hauled down —"

"Who hauled it down?"

"That Frenchman I told you about — Fleury."

"I did not hear just what the losses were."

"We lost fifteen killed and had eighty-three wounded. And, Noah, two thirds of the

losses were in Mad Anthony's column. What do you think of that?"

"Was Mad Anthony's wound a bad one?"

"He did n't pay any more attention to it than he did to the wounds he had at Germantown."

"They were in his hand and a foot."

"Yes. His head was pretty soon as sound as his foot and hand."

"How many did the redcoats lose?"

"Sixty-three killed and five hundred and forty-three prisoners. About seventy of the prisoners were wounded, though. Only one man got away."

"How did he do that?"

"Why, he ran and jumped into the river and escaped by swimming out to the Vulture. It was about two o'clock in the morning when everything was over. Mad Anthony sent a dispatch to General Washington, and almost the first thing — it was the first thing after he said that the fort and the garrison and Colonel Johnson had been taken — was, 'Our officers and men behaved like men who are determined to be free.'"

"That's it! That's it!" exclaimed Noah excitedly. "That's the secret of the whole thing!"

"It sure is," agreed Joseph. "Now, if the Congress, instead of voting medals, had voted something for the wives and children of the men to eat, there wouldn't have been the trouble there was afterward in the line."

"You say the men are all right now?"

"Better and madder than ever. — Here we are in the camp."

Noah looked about him with renewed interest as he and Joseph passed the sentries and soon were in the midst of the encampment. Despite the fact that Noah recognized many of his former comrades, he did not stop. The message he had received from Morgan the spy was uppermost in his thoughts, and until that had been delivered he did not permit himself to delay.

"Just as soon as I have gone with that man and the negro to the quarters of the Marquis I'll be with you, Noah," said Joseph, as he stopped and looked back at his recent companion and Samson.

"Don't stop for me, Joe," said Noah quickly. "Just tell me where I'll find Mad Anthony. I must see him right away."

"Here," called Joseph quickly, as he turned to a soldier near him, "you take this man to General Wayne's quarters."

As Noah turned to look at the soldier to whom his cousin had spoken, he exclaimed in surprise, "Why, George Baker! When did you get into the camp?"

"L-l-last n-n-night," replied George.

As Noah turned again to introduce his cousin, he saw that Joseph already had departed, running to meet Samson and the soldier who had brought the negro into the camp.

"Never mind," said Noah eagerly. "Do you know where Mad Anthony's quarters are?"

"Y-y-y —" began George.

"Don't stop to try to talk! Bob your head. Do you know?"

George's vigorous nod was all that the young soldier required, and instantly the two boys started toward the place Noah was eager to find.

"Is Smart Archie here?" inquired Noah of his companion.

"Y-y-y —" began George; then in despair he nodded vigorously several times.

"All the others?"

"N-n-no."

"They 're not?"

"No. T-t-they w-were t-t-trapped."

"How?"

"T-the Bloody Scout c-c-cut t-them o-off."

"Where? When? How did that happen?"

"T-that r-red-h-headed r-rascal t-that y-y-you let g-get away m-must h-have l-led them. T-that's w-w-what Smart Archie s-says."

"He did n't," said Noah promptly.

"I d-don't k-know," retorted George, again shaking his head. "Smart Archie s-says h-he d-d-did. A-any-w-way, t-they h-hid o-on t-t-the way a-and c-caught our m-men. Smart Archie o-ought n-not t-to h-have l-l-left them."

"Did n't one of them get through?"

"N-not o-one."

"What do you mean? Were they shot?"

"N-no! N-no! T-they w-were t-t-t—"

"Were what?"

"T-turned back," George managed to ejaculate. "Y-you ought t-to h-have s-s-seen Duncan! T-they s-say he f-fought l-l-like a p-painter. He a-a-and h-his b-brother w-were c-c-clubbing—"

"Duncan? How was that?"

"Duncan w-was c-crazy. Ever s-s-since t-that d-dance of h-his, he h-has been r-r-ready t-to f-f-fight h-his own s-s-shadow."

"And even his own brother, too? That's hard. Well, maybe the men will get through yet. We 'll need every one of them."

"N-no, t-they w-won't," said George.

"You can't tell."

"Major Gibbs s-says t-they w-won't. He s-says t-the Bloody Scout t-took — "

"How many men were there?"

"I-in t-the Scout?"

"No, no, in the band."

"About t-t-t-t — " George paused in despair and opened and closed his hands twice.

"Twenty? Is that what you mean?"

"Y-y-yes."

"You say Major Gibbs is here?"

"Y-yes, a-and a-all t-the m-men h-he h-had in t-the s-s-swamp."

"That 's good. Do you know where Nick is? He had two of our horses."

"Y-yes. Smart Archie s-said that — T-there 's y-your p-p-place," George abruptly declared, as he pointed to a low house near by. "T-there's y-your m-man, t-too," he contrived to add, as Mad Anthony himself appeared in the doorway.

Instantly leaving his companion, Noah ran to the house. For a moment the general apparently did not recognize his approaching visitor, for he looked sternly at the young soldier. A moment later, however, his face took on the smile which all his men knew

well, and impulsively flinging his arm about the neck of the young soldier he led Noah into the house. George stared a moment at the unexpected sight and then turned abruptly away.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AT GREEN SPRING

For a half-hour or more Noah remained with General Wayne, relating some of his experiences in the South and replying to the steady stream of rapid questions which came from Mad Anthony. The welcome which "Mad Anthony's wrestler," as Noah Dare was frequently called by the men, received was not dubious and the part which he had taken in the deeds of the legion of Light Horse Harry, in General Greene's campaigns in the Carolinas, was not lightly passed over.

"I fancy the word you bring from this man — Morgan, do you say his name is?" asked General Wayne.

"Yes, sir," replied Noah, in a low voice and glancing apprehensively about him as he spoke.

"I do not believe it is new to him, but we'll go at once and tell the Marquis. You come with me."

Noah hesitated as the general arose, and said, "Will it not be better for you to go

alone? The Marquis will not care to see me."

"Come!" replied Mad Anthony quickly.

Further protest was useless, and Noah at once obeyed, though he was hungry and weary from his recent experiences. It was not the first time the young soldier had seen "the boy," as the redcoats called Lafayette; but when he was ushered into his presence that June morning in 1781, he was impressed as he had not been before by the bearing of the young Frenchman, who, aroused by the struggle for liberty in America, had left his home, crossed the sea and tendered his aid to the colonies. He was still somewhat boyish in appearance, though his face betrayed more fully now than when Noah had last seen him the effect of the long war and the heavy responsibilities he had assumed. But his eyes were bright and his interest keen when Mad Anthony explained the purpose of Noah's coming.

The Marquis, at first manifestly startled by the young soldier's knowledge of the part which Morgan had assumed, was quieted by the assurance of Mad Anthony that the secret was safe in Noah's keeping. He was also impressed by the manner in which the young

soldier had met Morgan and the aid he had afforded when the spy had been taken by Smart Archie. Just how much the Marquis was enlightened by the message which Noah brought from Morgan was not plain, when at last the young soldier departed, leaving the commander to his duties.

"I've missed you, Sergeant Dare," said Mad Anthony to Noah, as the two retraced their way from the quarters of the Marquis.

"It's good to be missed," responded Noah, his heart warmed by the praise of the leader for whom he had unbounded affection.

"Did you hear about the revolt in the Pennsylvania line?"

"I did. It spread to the Jersey troops, too, didn't it?"

"It threatened to for a while, but it never amounted to much with them. We had another just before we left York. That is the time when I wished I had you with me."

"I'm afraid I could not have done much."

"The men were mad — mad as Mad Anthony," said the general, his eyes twinkling as he spoke. "They said they wanted to be paid in 'real not ideal money.' I didn't blame them, but it wasn't any time for a revolt. We ordered the ringleaders of the protest to their

tents, but they refused to go. So we knocked a few of them down and order was restored in a little while."

Noah glanced at the young general and saw that he was not cast down by the recollection of the stirring times through which he had passed. He was eager to ask the dashing leader about the assault on Stony Point, but not even the fact that he had known Anthony Wayne for years, and that the general was a friend of Noah's father, made him feel at that time that he dared to become personal in his questions. It was all very well for the athletic general to condescend at times to enter into the bouts and the rough-and-tumble contests of the camps. Indeed, Noah at that moment recalled the eagerness with which Mad Anthony had urged him to wrestle for the honors of his company. He remembered the quizzical expression on the face of the young officer, who, plainly at that time, had not been impressed by the prowess of the quiet unassuming lad. After he had succeeded in throwing the huge defender of the title, no one had been warmer in his praise or more enthusiastic in his recognition of the skill and strength of the young soldier. Again and again Mad Anthony pub-

licly had boasted of the prowess of "his" wrestler, and dared any of the companies to produce one who could compete with Noah Dare. From such public recognition of his abilities Noah had steadily drawn back. He entered into only a few bouts, but his success and tricks in wrestling had made him one of the marked men among Mad Anthony's followers. All that, however, did not warrant the slightest assumption of freedom with his leader, for it was well known that General Wayne was one of the strictest disciplinarians among all the Continental troops.

When Noah left his commander, he at once sought his cousin Joseph. His hunger and weariness provided ample excuses for not talking, and soon after he had been fed he withdrew, and stretching himself upon a blanket was asleep. All through the hours of the afternoon and night the tired boy slept, and when at last he was awakened by his cousin he was startled by the first words that were spoken to him.

"We 're leaving," said Joseph to Noah when the latter at last was awake.

"Why? Where are we going?"

"That 's more than I can say."

"Is Cornwallis attacking us?"

"I don't know that, either."

"What do you know?" asked Noah, somewhat irritably.

"That we're to break camp. You'll have your place in the line, Noah."

Joseph's words proved to be true, although the cause of the hasty withdrawal of the Americans was not fully known by the boys until several days had passed. Then the report spread throughout the army that Cornwallis had been joined by the two British generals for whose coming he had been waiting. There were also two other reports that spread among the soldiers. One was that Lord Cornwallis, after his army had been increased by the coming of the troops of General Phillips (all of whom were veterans), had received orders from General Clinton to send a part of his force at once by water to New York. The latter general, cooped up in New York, was afraid to leave the city, lest Washington, whose army was at Dobbs Ferry on the Hudson, should try to retake the town. The other report was that the forces of Cornwallis were short of supplies. They had found the Virginia people more uniformly devoted to the cause of the colonies than had been true even in the Carolinas, and, as a consequence, pro-

visions were becoming scant in the army of the redcoats. It was, therefore, the purpose of Cornwallis to march to some place where he might secure supplies from the British fleet. His troops at this time numbered five thousand —all veterans and all well equipped. On the other hand, Lafayette, with all the recent additions to his forces, did not have more than four thousand under his command, and many of these were raw and inexperienced, though they were willing and brave. Smart Archie and George were fair examples of the men who had rallied from the surrounding country to the aid of the Marquis.

The days that followed the departure of the American army from Fredericksburg were stirring ones for Noah Dare and his cousin. As usual, Mad Anthony and his men had places at the head of the advancing column, but, although Lafayette's forces were steadily increased until they numbered six thousand, the knowledge that his enemy's troops also had received additions, as well as the fact that many of his own soldiers were untried, caused the young commander to decide not to hazard a battle.

Lord Cornwallis now advanced to Richmond, but he did not long remain there. On the

twentieth of June (1781) he marched eastward, crossed the Chickahominy River, and then moved southeast, proceeding along the peninsula between the James and the York rivers as far as Williamsburg.

It was the sixth of July when word was brought Lafayette that Lord Cornwallis was about to cross to the south side of the James, at Green Spring, and was planning to advance to Portsmouth, Virginia, where he could embark some of his troops and secure supplies for the others from the British fleet. How word was received of this plan Noah never heard. He was a soldier in the line now and had slight opportunity to talk with those who knew. Indeed, Mad Anthony had seldom spoken to him, and had it not been for his recollections of his former experiences with the man, Noah would have had little to remind him that he was a favorite soldier of the daring young general. He had met Major Gibbs several times, and been informed by him that the major's intrepid wife had fled to her mother's home in North Carolina, and perhaps was as safe there as she would be anywhere until the outcome of the war was known.

It was at Green Spring, however, that Noah had his own experience with Mad Anthony in

an event not so well known as the attack on Stony Point, but that was none the less brave and heroic.

Lafayette's army had been following Cornwallis almost all the way down the James River. The sight of burned homes, of ruined plantations, and all the terrible results of Benedict Arnold's cruel work in Virginia, had steadily aroused and increased the anger of the Americans. Now that Cornwallis and his redcoats were following the line which the famous traitor had used, although the purely wanton destruction of property was not imitated by them, the American soldiers had an opportunity to observe some of the results of Arnold's cruelty. Perhaps this was not the least of the influences that brought the final crisis in the struggle.

When Lafayette, whose army was only a few miles in the rear of his enemy's, received word of the proposed crossing at Green Spring, he quickly ordered Mad Anthony to advance with his eight hundred Pennsylvania men to reconnoitre, and, if possible, to attack the rear guard of the redcoats after the main body had crossed the river. It was a good plan, and certainly Mad Anthony was a good man to lead such a daring undertaking. But the attempt

nearly proved to be the undoing of General Wayne, and Lafayette's army was nearer its greatest peril at that time than its youthful commander dreamed.

Lord Cornwallis was the shrewdest of all the British generals that fought in America in the War for Independence. Suspecting that the young Frenchman might be induced to attempt the very plan he adopted, Cornwallis prepared a clever trick. He encamped his main body of troops as compactly as possible in the dense pine forest near by, and even cast up a rude fortification on the Williamsburg Road along the right bank of Powhatan Creek. Next, he had a few of his soldiers display themselves freely on the edge of the woods, and meanwhile saw to it that the false impression of his plans, which Lafayette had already received, was strengthened by the reports of stragglers whom he sent into the American army. He ordered also that his pickets should suffer themselves to be insulted, and did everything in his power to increase the impression that his soldiers were in great alarm.

The stratagem was shrewd, and both Lafayette and Mad Anthony were almost caught in the trap. When the morning sun, on that sixth day of July (1781), arose, the land was

covered by a heavy fog. At noon the fog had cleared, but the heat was intense. It was three o'clock in the afternoon when the order for the attack was given. The heat was less intense then, and, as the night would soon be at hand, Lafayette believed that, if by any chance his plan was thwarted, then the darkness of the approaching night would enable his men to retreat safely.

As we know, Mad Anthony and his men were to make the attack. And they were ready. On their way they were compelled to march almost in single file over a causeway of logs that led across a deep swamp between them and the redcoats. In advance moved the best marksmen of the troops, and among these were Noah and his cousin Joseph.

At five o'clock the riflemen began an attack upon the British pickets. Then, all unaware of the redcoats hidden among the trees, Mad Anthony's soldiers advanced upon the outpost which was in plain sight. Every American was eager to do his part, for all were confident now of an easy victory.

Suddenly, two thousand redcoats appeared before the startled Americans. Yet for ten minutes the battle raged fiercely. Outnumbered and overpowered, the line began to fall

back. And Mad Anthony now saw the trap. Already troops were moving along his flanks trying to gain his rear, while directly in front was a solid body of veteran soldiers, coming steadily toward him. To retreat was now impossible. Lafayette was too far away to help in the crisis. It was a moment of supreme peril. Instantly, Mad Anthony decided that there was only one hope. He ordered his trumpeters to sound a full charge. A wild shout rang out from his men, as riflemen, cavalry, and infantry responded and dashed forward. Facing them was the British line. Cutlass, bayonet, and ball were all used. It was almost like rushing to certain destruction. Desperately and without wavering, Mad Anthony's men advanced. So fierce was the onslaught that the veteran redcoats looked on in amazement. In all their experience they had never faced a charge so hopeless, and yet so determined as this.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE CHEROKEE AND THE WELL

It now was the turn of Cornwallis to fear that he himself was the victim of a trick. Perhaps his own keen desire to entrap his enemies had made him suspicious that they, too, might be trying to lure him on. At all events, it was impossible for the British general to believe that such a wild and desperate charge by a small body of troops against veteran soldiers, who outnumbered them more than six to one, would be attempted unless there was some support for them of which he did not know. The redcoats halted or fell back in amazement before the onslaught.

Mad Anthony, aware of the desperate plight in which he and his daring followers were placed, quick to act, was instantly aware of the effect of the charge. When he saw that the flanking parties, which were trying to gain the rear of his troops, also halted, he instantly sounded a retreat.

Lafayette, who now was aware of his fellow general's peril, was already preparing to aid

him. His line was formed in the rear of the place where the Pennsylvania men were struggling. Mad Anthony, aware of this support and that the Marquis was planning to cover his retreat if he should make one, at once withdrew. And the redcoats did not follow. Some said that the failure to act was due to their astonishment at the daring of the men who had charged them. Others, however, maintained that it was the fear of Cornwallis that Lafayette and Wayne were trying to lure him into a trap that was the cause of the failure to pursue. At all events, Mad Anthony's men withdrew in safety, and in a brief time were once more with their fellow soldiers and free from immediate peril.

Calling in his detachments, Cornwallis that same evening crossed over to Jamestown Island, and three days afterward (July 9, 1781) crossed the James River, and by easy stages started for Portsmouth. In accordance with the order of General Clinton, Cornwallis then embarked a part of his army for New York, but while the transports were at Hampton Roads he received further orders for these troops to remain and to obtain and hold some place which could easily be defended. It seems that Benedict Arnold and some of the

most bitter Tories were now to be sent to lay waste parts of Connecticut, just as they had been doing along the James in Virginia. In this manner Clinton believed that the patriots of the North would be so alarmed for their safety and their possessions that Washington would not dare weaken his forces by sending any more men to the army in Virginia, much less would he think of withdrawing himself. As we know, Benedict Arnold's brutal and savage attacks did much damage to the Connecticut people, but we know also that Clinton's plan failed in inducing Washington to make any change in his own campaign.

In a brief time, convinced that the army of Cornwallis had really gone to Portsmouth, Lafayette's forces pitched camp near Williamsburg, where they were to remain almost two months, or until the combined armies of the Americans were ready for the siege of the British troops at Yorktown.

Meanwhile, the summer days were passing monotonously for Noah Dare and his cousin. The heat was intense and the activities of the camp were limited. There were additions to the forces under Lafayette, though many of them were untried men who had rallied after their homes had been destroyed or their pos-

sessions had been taken by the ravaging bands of Tories or redcoats that still continued their marauding in the region. Colonel Tarleton, still merciless, was one of the most active of these men, and his wild deeds in the Carolinas were now being matched by his methods in Virginia. No home was safe if its head was even suspected of any sympathy for the rebels. Indeed, the feeling of bitterness increased as the armies in a measure ceased their open warfare, for on each side the commander was waiting — Cornwallis until he should receive aid from Clinton and Lafayette until Washington should send or bring help. The young Marquis was doing his utmost to hold the army of the redcoats to the little peninsula to which it had withdrawn. The lack of action and the uncertainty were having a marked effect upon the men, as the days slowly passed. Indeed, Mad Anthony himself seemed to chafe under the enforced quiet almost as much as did his men. The two camps, those of Wayne and Lafayette, were not far apart, and the soldiers of one were frequently seen in the other, while the rivalry between them was intense.

"Noah," said Mad Anthony one August day, as he met the young soldier in the camp,

"I think we'll have to get up a wrestling match to pass the time. What do you say to meeting the best man the young Marquis has?"

"I'd rather not, General Wayne," said Noah quietly.

"And why? You have not lost your courage, have you?"

"I do not think I am afraid," replied Noah, with a smile.

"Then we must have a bout, sir," declared the impulsive general.

"I'd much prefer not to, General. There is nothing to be gained —"

"You're mistaken," interrupted Mad Anthony, with a laugh. "I shall arrange for a match. It will keep the men from thinking too much about their own troubles. You'll have to do your part, Noah, in keeping the army in good condition. If this waiting keeps up much longer, there's no knowing what will happen. I have your word that you will not back out?"

"I don't 'back out,' General Wayne," said Noah, a little warmly, an effect which the general noticed with satisfaction, "though I'm telling you just how I feel. I'm not sure either, after all I have been doing, that I am in any condition —"

"I 'll take all that risk, Sergeant Noah," interrupted Mad Anthony, with a laugh. "It 's all for the good of the service, you understand. Our men must have something to think of besides the warm weather and their waiting for something — they don't just know what. Nor do the rest of us know any more. I 'll go over to the other camp within a day or two and make arrangements. Noah, don't you and Joe want to take to-day off?"

"Yes, sir," replied Noah promptly.

"Very well. Take a couple of horses and ride wherever you think you 'll be most likely to hear of that cutthroat, Tarleton's, presence."

"Isn't he in the camp of Cornwallis?"

"Yes,— part of the time. But he still is at his old tricks of raiding. If we could once locate him and cut him off from getting back to camp it would be worth while."

"Do you know where we 'd be likely to hear of his presence?"

"I do not. If I knew, I should not send you," laughed the general good-naturedly. "Don't take any foolish chances, Noah, but still I want you to find out what you can."

"Yes, sir," replied Noah quickly. "We are to be gone all day?"

"If you wish."

As soon as he was left to himself, Noah at once sought his cousin, and after he had explained the commission Joseph was as eager as his companion for the break in the monotony of the camp-life. Securing two horses, they at once departed.

There was no special place to which they were to go, but at Joseph's suggestion they followed a rough road that led away from the direction in which the redcoats were encamped. When an hour had passed, the boys found themselves passing out of a long stretch of woods and before them were the burned ruins of an old plantation. Several gates at intervals had to be opened, for the road now passed through fields that at one time had been planted with corn. Not a person was to be seen anywhere near, and for a time the boys were silent as they looked upon the scene of desolation before him.

"We have n't seen a man since we left camp," suggested Joseph in a low voice, as the young soldiers drew their horses to a walk.

"No," responded Noah absently.

"Yet we 've passed two or three places—"

"Yes."

"Where are the people?"

"The men may be in the armies; the women and children very likely have gone to some place where they 'll be safe."

"Where is that?"

"I don't know."

"The big barn was n't burned here," suggested Joseph, as he pointed to a rude structure that had not been set on fire.

"Yes."

"Shall we stop? There might be a little forage left. If there is any hay or corn we can get it on our way back. Every little will help now, you know."

Noah assented to the suggestion, and, dismounting, the boys tied their horses to some trees in the rear of the barn and entered the building.

"There 's nothing left," said Joseph, after a brief inspection. "The redcoats must have taken the last wisp of straw. The barn is as clean as if it had been swept with a broom."

"Probably some foraging party has been here," suggested Noah. "It may have been some of our own men."

"I think not — " began Joseph; then, stopping abruptly, he grasped his cousin by the arm and whispered, "Hark! There 's somebody coming!"

Startled by the exclamation, Noah advanced to the door and looked into the road. Not far away was a man swiftly approaching on horseback, and from his actions the young soldier suspected his destination was to be the barn itself. What the purpose of the unknown horseman was in coming to the deserted spot, of course Noah could not even conjecture.

Convinced that the man certainly was riding toward the barn, the young soldier turned quickly to Joseph and said, "Go out the back door! Take our horses farther into the woods! The man can't see you, if you go at once. If he should find us here —"

"We are two to his one," suggested Joseph.

"Go!" said Noah hastily. "I 'll watch this fellow. If I need help, I 'll call. Don't wait a minute!"

Joseph made no further protest, and turning to the door in the back of the barn he ran to the place where the two horses were tied and led them farther within the shelter of the woods. Then hastily tying them to a tree he ran back to the border of the woods, and, standing behind one of the large trees, he watched the approaching man.

Noah, too, was keenly intent upon the ap-

proach of the horseman. As the man came nearer, the young soldier was startled when he discovered that the rider was an Indian, and a moment later his surprise was still greater when he recognized the horseman as Nick. The horse, too, was the one which Noah had taken in his flight from the place where he had seen Cornwallis and his band at the home of the woman who had so resolutely maintained her rights. A moment later he whispered to himself, "There 's no mistake! That 's Corn-Crib and it 's Nick who is riding him."

Noah's first impulse to advance and make himself known was quickly checked, and he decided to remain where he was and watch the Cherokee for a time. In a brief time he was deeply interested in the actions of Nick. The Indian halted in front of the barn and uttered a low call.

As no response to his hail was made, he repeated the signal twice; and as the silence still was unbroken, Nick then dismounted, and leading his horse by the bridle advanced toward the barn. Noah instantly darted to the shelter of a large bin and crouched behind it. He was unable to see the Cherokee, but when Nick repeated his call before he entered, the young soldier's excitement increased. Nick

plainly was expecting to meet some one here, but who was a mystery.

In a brief time the Cherokee withdrew from the barn, convinced that no one was awaiting him there. As soon as he was certain that Nick was gone, Noah cautiously advanced from his hiding-place and looked out of the door. He saw the Cherokee making toward the well in the rear of the house. The Indian dropped the bridle of his horse and raised the bucket by the aid of the long sweep, but instead of drinking, Noah was startled when he thought he saw Nick place something in the bucket and then carefully lower it into the well. The Indian manifestly was deeply interested in what he was doing and did not once look behind him.

Instantly Noah advanced from the barn. As he came nearer the Indian, who still apparently was unaware of his presence, Noah grasped the bridle of Corn-Crib and then said, "Nick, what are you doing?"

The startled Cherokee instantly turned and faced the young soldier. The expression of surprise on his face quickly was suppressed as he recognized Noah, but he did not reply to the question which had been asked.

CHAPTER XXX

A PUZZLING MESSAGE

"Why have you come here?" Noah again inquired.

The young Cherokee's eyes glistened and he glanced toward the road, but still the question was not answered.

"Nick, where did you come from?"

"No stay," replied the Indian.

"Where are you going?"

"No stay," repeated Nick.

"What did you put in the bucket?" asked Noah abruptly.

The young Indian was not able entirely to repress the surprise which manifestly the question aroused. He looked at the young soldier, and for a moment Noah was fearful the Indian was about to spring upon him. He hastily drew back a step, an action which was not lost upon Nick; but the young soldier carelessly had left in his saddle the pistol he had brought, and although the Cherokee was not armed, Noah was well aware of his agility and what he might do in a sudden attack.

"What is in the bucket, Nick?" he inquired once more.

"No leave in bucket," said Nick quietly.

"Yes. I saw you put something in it," said Noah firmly.

Disregarding the unspoken protest, Noah advanced to the curb and began to pull down the sweep. As the bucket rose to the surface he saw within it a slip of paper, but as he reached to grasp it the young Indian suddenly sprang upon him.

The onslaught was not entirely unexpected, but the movements of Nick were so quick that he had succeeded in flinging one arm around Noah's neck and was exerting himself to the utmost to drive his knee in the small of the young soldier's back before his contestant could shake his hold. Letting the sweep fall, Noah gave all his attention to breaking the grip in which he was held. He quickly realized that he was dealing with a trained wrestler and one almost as powerful as he. And the young Cherokee was marvelously quick, too, he realized, as he tried to slip from his grasp. The contestants were dangerously near the low well. A slip or a false step might send both to the bottom.

Aware of the double peril, Noah's first ef-

fort was to gain the ground farther from the well. Nick's arm was around his neck holding back the head of his opponent, though thus far he had failed in placing his knee against Noah's back. Not a word had been spoken since the struggle began, though the labored breathing of the wrestlers was audible to each. Slowly Noah forced the contest back from the curb until he was positive that the peril of falling into the water was no longer to be feared. The hold which Nick had upon the young soldier's neck was unbroken and he was still clinging to his back. The tricks which Noah had employed in his bouts in the camp apparently were useless. The Indian's methods of wrestling were not like those which had been used by the soldiers. All Noah's attempts to grasp the body or at least a leg of the Indian, who was clinging tightly to him, did not avail. The almost incredible quickness of Nick, too, thwarted every movement Noah had made except the one to force him into a spot beyond the well.

At last, by a sudden action Noah succeeded in seizing the Cherokee's right arm. Nick's struggles redoubled, and for a brief time his opponent's strength and attention were devoted to his effort to prevent himself from

being strangled. The Cherokee's left arm was almost like a band of iron about his neck. Twice Noah stumbled and almost fell upon his face, but each time by a desperate effort he succeeded in regaining his foothold. He could feel that his head was drawn against the side of the Indian's. His breath came in gasps. The very trees seemed to be floating in the air.

Noah believed now that his main hope was in his grip of his opponent's right arm. His own left arm had been vainly used in trying to break Nick's grasp of his neck. Suddenly, Noah released his left hand and with both hands twisted the Cherokee's right. The pressure was more than the Cherokee could bear, and as both wrestlers fell to the ground the young soldier was aware that Nick's right arm was underneath. A groan escaped the red wrestler, and before he could recover Noah had swiftly turned his contestant upon his back and was sitting upon Nick's chest with each hand pinning one of Nick's to the ground.

Noah was looking directly down into the Cherokee's face now, and tossing back the hair which had fallen into his eyes he breathlessly asked, "Nick, what shall I do with you?"

The question was an empty one, for Noah dared not let go his hold and yet he was unable to rise.

The Indian did not reply but instantly began to twist and squirm in a desperate attempt to free himself. In this part of the contest Noah was an adept, and he smiled grimly as he steadily maintained his place and easily prevented the Indian from escaping. He realized speedily, too, that Nick's right arm was almost helpless, and he at once concluded that it had been badly wrenched or broken in the fall.

"What is it, Noah? Who is this redskin?"

Noah looked up to see Joseph bending over him, his face expressive of his astonishment and alarm. At another time the young soldier might have laughed at the look of amazement, but he said quietly,—

"Hold this fellow's arm, Joe! I'll tell you about it later."

As Joseph at once grasped the young Cherokee's arms, Noah arose and said,—

"Keep a tight hold on him, Joe!"

Turning hastily to the well, Noah once more drew up the bucket and found the slip which he had seen before.

On the paper were written the words, "Cannot meet you. The French have come. G. T."

"Nick," said the young soldier, as he hastily returned, "who was to meet you here? Who is the man that gave you this paper?"

The young Indian gazed steadily at his questioner and did not reply.

"What is that paper?" asked Joseph.

"I wish I knew," said Noah, as he read it aloud.

"'G. T.'" exclaimed Joseph quickly. "That must be Guy Tarleton. The colonel was to meet some one here."

"That may be so, Joe," said Noah, looking toward the road as he spoke. "He has sent word that he is not coming, though."

"But some one else is."

"That 's true. We must get back to camp. What do you fancy he means by 'The French have come?'"

"What he says. We must take that word to Mad Anthony—if it is true. And we must start before the party he was to meet can come here."

"That 's also true."

"What shall we do with this fellow?" asked Joseph, looking again at Nick, who had been quiet since the coming of the additional soldier.

"Leave him here. Get our horses, Joe! Be

quick about it, too! Don't delay a minute! We must start!"

Noah was keenly excited now, and his cousin did not require a second bidding as he left Nick to his companion.

The young soldier again endeavored to draw some explanation from his prisoner, but without avail. The Indian was silent and stolid.

In a brief time Joseph returned with the two horses which had been hidden in the woods behind the barn. Glancing hastily at Nick to see that the young Indian was not preparing for a renewal of his attack, Noah said,—

"We 'll go back to camp, Joe, and we 'll go a good deal faster than we came."

"What shall we do with this fellow?" again inquired Joseph, looking at the Cherokee as he spoke.

"Nothing. Leave him here. I think his arm was broken in his fall. He 'll be able to look out for himself."

"Some one may come—some of those whom 'G. T.' was to meet."

"Then the sooner we're gone the better for us. Mount your horse, Joe."

As his cousin at once did as he was bidden, Noah leaped upon the back of his horse, and

holding Corn-Crib by the bridle prepared to depart.

"Going to take that horse, too?" asked Joseph in surprise.

"I am. He's a beauty, and belongs to me more than he does to this sneaking Cherokee. I'm going to take him."

Nick's interest in the actions of the young soldier was manifestly keen, but he made no protest. His right arm was helpless, and perhaps he wisely concluded that he was no match for the two boys. At all events he did not speak, nor did he protest against the taking of his horse. His dark eyes frequently were turned toward the distant road, and as Joseph noticed his action he said anxiously,—

"Come on, Noah! Somebody may be here any moment. We don't want to lose more time. Mad Anthony will be interested in that slip of paper you found in the bucket."

"I'm ready," replied Noah, as he spoke to his horse, and both boys advanced into the lane. Corn-Crib followed obediently and easily swung into the swifter pace which was used when it became manifest that the young Cherokee had not left his place by the well.

"There comes somebody!" exclaimed Noah

in a low voice, as he looked anxiously to the road at their right.

"There are five men anyway, and they're all mounted!" said Joseph excitedly, as he saw the approaching band in the distance. "We must make a break for it or they'll head us off!" he added anxiously.

"They'll get into the lane before we can make the road," said Noah in a low voice. "They'll cut us off! The only thing we can do, Joe, is to strike across the fields on our left."

"Go ahead!"

"Keep your eyes open. I am not sure of the way."

"Any way is good if we can dodge these fellows."

"Of course we don't know — they might be friends —"

"Not if you read that slip of paper in your pocket," broke in Joseph. "Don't wait! If they're friends we shan't lose anything, and if they're not, their room is better than their company."

Without waiting for his cousin to reply, Joseph abruptly turned his horse and jumped the low fence on his left. Noah speedily followed his example, Corn-Crib jumping as easily

as the horse which was leading him. The boys by this time also had been seen by the approaching party. A loud call came across the fields, but giving it no heed, the two young riders put their horses into their swiftest paces and sped across the open land toward the woods beyond. Just where they would find the road back to Williamsburg, neither of them knew, but both were aware of the need of haste. Looking behind them, they saw that the five riders also had quickened the speed of their mounts and were rapidly riding up the lane.

The sight provided an additional incentive for the boys, and their swift pace became still swifter. Another loud shout from behind them was followed by several shots, and as Noah again looked back he saw that the young Cherokee was running toward the approaching band and with his left hand was wildly pointing toward the fleeing young soldiers.

At this moment, however, the boys entered the woods, and as they rode forward over the rough ground they were hidden from the sight of their pursuers. Their efforts to increase the distance between them and the unknown men behind them were not relaxed, and with their horses stumbling over the fallen trunks of

trees or their feet frequently sinking in the soft earth, the young soldiers still maintained their swift flight. All three horses now were dripping, and their breathing was becoming heavy and labored. How long the desperate efforts could be maintained was an increasing cause of anxiety.

"Look there, Noah!" suddenly exclaimed Joseph. "Isn't that a road off to the left?"

"That 's just what it is, Joe!" replied Noah. "We'll make for it!"

Turning their horses toward the road which Joseph had discovered, they soon entered it. The ground was soft even in the road, but there were no logs or swampy places to be crossed, and as a consequence the flight of the two boys became slightly less difficult. They were both uncertain whither the road led, but convinced that the camp they were seeking lay somewhere to their left, they turned without delay in that direction and sped on their way.

When fifteen minutes had passed, Noah drew the reins on the horse he was riding and Joseph instantly followed his example. Both listened intently, but not a sound of pursuit could either hear.

"They 've given up," said Joseph at last.

"I 'm not sure, but it does look that way.

There may be some other way that they know by which they can get ahead of us and cut us off. We don't even know that we are on the right road. Perhaps we're headed for Yorktown, not for Williamsburg."

"Come on, Noah!" said Joseph instantly. "We mustn't let the grass grow under our feet. We'll have to keep a sharp lookout ahead as well as behind us now."

The flight was quickly resumed, although the horses by this time were showing plainly the effect of their labors. An occasional breathing-spell was afforded when a stop was made to permit the boys to listen for the sound of pursuers or to discover the presence of men in advance. An hour, however, passed before men were seen, and then both young soldiers were startled by what they saw.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE COMING OF THE GREAT COMMANDER

"THAT 's George Baker!" exclaimed Noah, as he saw a young man running swiftly along the road in advance of them. "He acts as if something is wrong."

"Call him!" suggested Joseph.

In accordance with his cousin's advice Noah hailed the young soldier, who abruptly stopped as he heard the shout and looked quickly behind him. Even then apparently he was impatient of the delay, and turned as though he was about to resume his flight.

In a brief time, however, the two boys overtook him, and as they drew near, Noah inquired, —

"What is wrong, George?"

"M-mad Anthony," replied the stammerer breathlessly.

"What has happened?" asked Noah sharply. "Tell us! Why are you running?"

"H-h-he h-h-has b-b-b-b —" Apparently the words would not come, though George was laboring hard to explain the trouble.

"Yes! Yes! What is it?" demanded Noah sharply.

"H-he h-h-has b-b-been s-s-shot," George contrived to ejaculate.

"Shot!" exclaimed both boys, aghast.

"T-t-t-that 's w-w-what I said, d-d-did n't I?"

"You did! Yes! But tell us about it. Is he dead?"

"N-n-no."

"Why don't you explain yourself?" said Noah excitedly.

"T-that 's j-j-just w-w-what I 'm d-d-doing." Perspiration was running in streams down George's face, and his desire to tell his story was so manifest that Joseph at last, having mercy upon him, turned to his cousin with the suggestion that either he should help the stuttering soldier by asking him direct questions or should leave him to tell his story in his own way.

"George, you 're tired," said Noah quietly. "Don't try to say too much. Get on the back of this horse I 'm leading. You 'll talk better there."

George instantly leaped upon the back of Corn-Crib, and, disregarding the appeals of his companions, at once urged the animal into

his swiftest paces. For a time both Noah and Joseph did their utmost to keep up with their excited friend, but their efforts were unavailing. Corn-Crib soon left the other horses far behind him, and as horse and rider disappeared in the woods before them, Joseph turned to his cousin and said, —

"What do you make of it, Noah?"

"Mad Anthony has been shot."

"Yes, but how? Who shot him?"

"You know as much about that as I do. You heard what George said."

"I heard what he tried to say."

"Well, that 's all any one heard. Come on! We must get back to camp."

"That horse you took from the Indian is a good one, Noah."

"I wish I had the Cherokee, too."

"That would n't do him any good."

"I 'm not thinking of *his* good. I 'm thinking of my own — and what it might mean to our army to have him here."

"You think he is a spy?"

"No. I think he was all right when he was with Major Gibbs, but very likely something has happened which Nick did n't like and he has gone over to the other side. That 's the way those redskins have. Of course we know

that the Cherokees have sided with the redcoats. Nick was under some personal obligations to the major, and so he followed him. Either he thinks he has done all he can for him and so is free to go with his tribe, or something has been said or done to ruffle his feathers and he has gone over to the British — probably to Guy Tarleton, if those are his initials on this paper in my pocket."

It was only the following day when Noah learned that his suspicion was well founded, for Major Gibbs himself informed the young soldier of the defection of Nick three weeks before this time. The young Cherokee had taken offense at the failure of the major to give him a silver-mounted pistol which he greatly desired, and he had promptly gone over to the other side.

"That big negro, Samson, is still in camp, isn't he?" asked Joseph.

"I think so. He comes and goes."

Noah did not explain to his cousin the part which the huge black had taken in the work which Morgan the spy was doing. There were some things, so perilous and important were Morgan's daring undertakings, which were not even to be mentioned to Joseph, although the young soldier's confidence in his

cousin's integrity was as firm as ever it had been.

"We're lucky to get back to camp," said Joseph as he saw the guard before him. "Your note is almost as important as the news your stuttering friend gave us about Mad Anthony."

"Joe," said Noah, when the two boys had been permitted by the picket to pass the lines, "you find out about Mad Anthony while I take this slip of paper I found in that bucket to some one that ought to have it."

The boys separated, and Noah hastened to the quarters of General Wayne. His surprise was great when he was informed that Mad Anthony was there. For a moment he was convinced that George had merely reported a wild rumor — such as were frequently flying about the two camps; but when he said to the orderly, —

"I heard that General Wayne had been — "

"Yes, he was shot," said the orderly.

"How did it happen? Who did it? Was he hurt badly?" began Noah, his excitement returning as he heard the quiet statement.

"It was done by a half-witted guard in the other camp. General Wayne had gone over to the camp of the Marquis — "

"Yes, I know," broke in Noah, as he recalled the last words he had heard Mad Anthony speak. "Why did the guard shoot him?"

"He did n't know who the general was."

"Did n't he give the countersign?"

"I can't tell you," said the orderly, smiling slightly as he spoke. "I have a suspicion that the general did n't stop for a little thing like that."

"Where was he shot?"

"In the leg."

"Is it serious?"

"No — a flesh wound. The general insists that he will be all right in a few days."

"That's good!" exclaimed the young soldier enthusiastically. "Can I see him?"

"I think not."

"Tell him it's Sergeant Noah Dare, and that I have a very important word for him."

"I 'll see," said the orderly dubiously as he turned away. In a brief time he returned and his confusion was manifest as he said, "The general will see you. Come with me."

The man still acted as if he ought to refuse permission for the young soldier to enter, but the word he had received was not to be lightly ignored.

Entering the house, Noah saw General Wayne stretched upon a bed, but his expression was half humorous as he greeted his visitor.

"Sorry, Noah, that I could n't arrange that wrestling-bout for you. That rascally guard fired at me and by some streak of bad luck hit me in the thigh. I 'll be as good as new in a week, and then I'll fix it up, my lad."

"I 'm glad you did n't succeed. I 've had one bout this morning and that is all I want. This is what I found," he added, as he handed the slip of paper to the wounded leader.

Mad Anthony reached for the missive, and as he read its contents he said quietly, —

"Yes, we know the French fleet has come. We had word of it yesterday."

"How? Who brought the word?"

"That I shall not tell you. I fancy, however, that you might guess."

Noah was convinced from the manner of the man before him that the name of one informant was not unknown to him, but he did not express his suspicion. There was peril even in mentioning names.

"Yes, the fleet has come from the West Indies," resumed Mad Anthony. "It 's a bigger and stronger fleet than any the red-

coats have. They have shut Cornwallis up on the peninsula. You see they 'll guard by water and the Marquis by land. We'll have the whole body bottled up."

"But is our army strong enough to shut them in by land if the redcoats try to break through?"

"It is, and it will be a good deal stronger. The fleet already has landed troops to help us and — well, you must wait until you see what happens." The face of the eager young leader was glowing, and it almost seemed as if his unfortunate wound was ignored. "We'll have all the troops we need," he added, his dark eyes shining in his excitement.

"Do you think those letters on that paper —'G. T.'—are meant for Colonel Guy Tarleton?" inquired Noah.

"Quite likely. The rascal has been at his old tricks. He was n't satisfied with his raids in the Carolinas and has been busy almost every day hereabout. The cold-blooded villain! I 'd like to see him get a good dose of his own medicine!"

The excitement in the American camps now was running high. A British fleet heroically attacked and attempted to scatter the French vessels which Count De Grasse had brought

from the West Indies, but it was itself driven back. The lines about Cornwallis seemed to be growing tighter every day, and the hope of escape, which he still cherished, was daily becoming dimmer. The reinforced armies of Lafayette prevented all his attempts by land, while the French men-of-war cut off his hopes by sea. The coming of Clinton from New York was also becoming less probable. The jealousy between the two British leaders was a matter commonly known among the men, and, besides, General Washington was doing his utmost to hold the commander of the redcoats in New York by leading him to believe that the city was in daily peril of an attack by the armies of Rochambeau, which had landed in Newport the preceding year and now were with the Continental troops at Dobbs Ferry.

At this time Noah suffered a keen disappointment when Mad Anthony and his brave Pennsylvania line were ordered to a position between Portsmouth and Petersburg. It was thought by the Marquis that Cornwallis might make a desperate attempt to break through the besieging lines. If by chance he should succeed, then Mad Anthony was just the man to head off the shrewdest of the British generals in America in his attempt to break away from

the net that steadily was being drawn around him.

Disappointed as both Noah and his tall cousin were in the transfer of their line, still the reports that came daily from the camp of the Marquis provided a continual source of interest. Cornwallis thus far was unable to obtain reinforcements and equally unable to drive away the besieging forces, whose steadily encroaching lines increased the peril of the troubled commander. The confidence and determination of the Continentals became stronger with every passing day. The gay French soldiers, with their bright uniforms and splendid equipment, placed the rough and rugged American soldiers in the camp in a somewhat crude light, but in the spirit of devotion to the cause the ragged Continentals easily held their own.

A few more days passed, and Noah's surprise was as great as his delight when Mad Anthony's army was hastily ordered to return and join the forces that hemmed in the redcoats at Yorktown. The excitement of the young soldier was still greater when a rumor spread among the men that General Washington and Count Rochambeau had arrived at Yorktown with their armies. The report was received with incredulity at first. It did not seem pos-

sible that the combined forces could have evaded Clinton's watchfulness and withdrawn from the vicinity of New York without any attempt of the British leader to overtake them. Besides, the withdrawal of Washington from the region about New York would leave the country there unprotected. The ravages of Benedict Arnold in Virginia were fresh in the minds of the soldiers, and now there were reports that the arch traitor had been sent on a similar errand to plunder and burn the homes and property of the patriots along the shores of Long Island Sound. The rumors were believed, too, for in this way Clinton might easily believe that he could hold Washington in the North to protect, as best he might be able, the suffering people whom Arnold was persecuting.

All doubt, however, was removed when Noah and Joseph saw the troops in the camp. Excited and interested, the boys now found little time for anything except the hard work of the siege. They did learn, however, that Washington, who had been called "the fox" by Lord Cornwallis, had lived up to his reputation. He had caused some of his men, with letters on their persons supposedly informing General Heath at Morristown that he was about to

attack New York, to be taken by Clinton's soldiers, and the dispatches were given the anxious commander.

When at last the army started down the west bank of the Hudson, even then Washington caused a rumor to be circulated that he was marching to attack Staten Island. And the British general not unnaturally believed the report.

Suddenly Washington's army struck off through New Jersey to Philadelphia, marched quickly forward to Elkton, and there took shipping down Chesapeake Bay to the James River and joined Lafayette's army before Yorktown. It was too late for Clinton to try to follow. Cornwallis was hemmed in on every side.

CHAPTER XXXII

CONCLUSION

The days that followed were busy ones for the hardy Continentals. Redoubts were built, earthworks were thrown up, and the besieging armies steadily pushed their way nearer and nearer their helpless enemies. It is true that the soldiers of Cornwallis, too, were not idle. With the spirit of their race they steadily resisted. Fierce attacks were made upon the encroaching lines, and though occasionally a sortie seemed to result favorably for the redcoats, it was only for a brief time. The British army was outnumbered and surrounded. Escape was impossible, and its only hope for aid was from Clinton — a help which did not come. The fleet of De Grasse was too strong for the British vessels to break through.

One day when Noah Dare was relieved from his task, he came face to face in the camp with a man whose presence was as startling to the young soldier as it was unexpected. The man smiled as he noticed the expression on the face of his friend, and he said quietly, —

"You were not looking for me in the camp, were you, Noah?"

"No. Are you going back?" the young soldier asked in a whisper, as he glanced about him to make sure his words were not overheard.

"No, sir. I've had my last day with the redcoats," replied Morgan, for it was the Jersey spy whom Noah had met.

"Do many of our men know what you have been doing?"

"Only the Marquis — and you and two or three more."

"When did you come back?"

"Yesterday."

"To stay?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Did Cornwallis or any one suspect you?"

"No; at least, I'm quite sure they did not. The greatest piece of work I did was to talk to Lord Cornwallis. Not long ago he sent for me, and when I came I found him with Tarleton. The general asked me (you know he believed me to be a deserter) if Lafayette had many boats."

"What did you tell him?"

"A lie, though my conscience has n't troubled me any. The work of a spy is a part of

war, is n't it? Well, I told him that the Marquis had so many boats that he could transport his army across the river at a moment's warning. I put it just as strong as I thought he 'd bear it."

"What did he say when you told him that?"

"He did n't say anything to me. He turned to Colonel Tarleton and said, 'There! I told you this would not do.'"

"What did he mean?"

"I think they were planning to escape across the James River. They did n't try it, though, for if Lafayette had more boats than the redcoats had, the trick would n't work."

"And so your words helped to hold Cornwallis at Yorktown?"

"I 've told you all I know," replied Morgan quietly.

"That was great! You ought to be promoted for all you 've done!"

"The Marquis did suggest something of the kind."

"Of course he did!" said Noah eagerly. "That 's the kind of man he is! What are you to be—a captain?"

"No."

"What, then?"

"Just a soldier in the ranks."

"Why do you say that? It 's only just that you should be paid in money or by some office."

"The Marquis offered both to me."

"And you are n't going to take either?"

"I am not."

"Please tell me why."

"Tell me first what salary General Washington receives."

"He has n't any. He said, when he was first appointed, that he would n't take any."

"Then why should I?"

"You deserve it."

"Does n't he deserve it?"

"Yes, but—"

"I did take something," broke in the spy.

"Good! What was it?"

"A gun."

"Was that all?" asked Noah, smiling as he spoke.

"Was n't that enough?" As the young soldier laughed and did not reply, Morgan continued, "I wanted that gun and I did n't want any office."

"Why not?"

"Look here, Noah. Some men are fitted to be officers, are n't they?"

"Some of them are — not all."

"That 's what I think. We have all the incompetent officers we need. Then I know as well as any one that I make a good soldier. But no one — and I, least of all, — knows whether or not I'd make a good officer. I intend to do all in my power for my country, but I can't do any more than that. I am not impressed by some of our men who are too large for their nether garments. Besides, I 've learned the difference between a patriot and a traitor — between a man like General Washington and one like Benedict Arnold."

"What is the difference?"

"One tries to do for his country and the other tries to get all he can from his country. I'm not a great man, but I am too big to try that scheme."

"I wish we had more men like you," said Noah quietly.

"There are plenty — beginning at the top with General Washington. Noah, Cornwallis is bottled just as sure as you 're born."

"Great! How long will it take us to get him?"

"Just as long as he can hold out — and not a minute longer. Did you hear that Smart Archie fell this morning?"

"No! Are you sure? Where was it?"

"He was in command of a company that was digging in the trenches. The redcoats made a sortie and he fell into the ditch."

"Dead?"

"Yes."

"It's too bad," said Noah soberly. "He was a bright fellow and brave, too."

"So he was. If you had n't helped me that time when he took me from the Bloody Scout I might have had serious trouble. I did not want to tell him who I was, unless I was compelled."

"What are you to do next?"

"Just serve in the ranks here."

"If the redcoats should get you—"

"They won't. They can't."

"Cornwallis is still hoping that Clinton will help him, is n't he?"

"He has n't given up all hope. That is why he is fighting like a rat in his hole. He 'll have to give up, though. He has n't a chance to get away, any more than the redcoats have of breaking through the lines."

"How long will it take to bring him to terms?"

"You asked me that question before."

"Did I? What is the answer?"

"Just the same as it was then. Lord Corn-

wallis will fight just as long as his supplies last and he has any hope of help coming from New York. No one knows, but I don't believe he can hold his position many days. Unless something unexpected happens, General Washington will have Cornwallis and his redcoats prisoners before long."

"I hope so with all my heart. You must have had some hard experiences," suggested Noah.

"Some of them were a bit exciting," interrupted the spy. "I have n't any time to tell you about them now. Some day when the war is ended and you are at home again, I 'll tell you about them."

The prophecy of Morgan was fulfilled. Steadily the Americans pushed forward their works and lines. The desperate resistance of the redcoats was unavailing. The steady advance continued. The enthusiastic men labored in the ditches night and day. Even the storms had no power to check their enthusiasm. Before them was the ablest of all the British generals on the American soil. With him was a body of eight thousand trained troops. Every Continental was aware of what success now would mean. In the camps the men, in low tones, talked of their labors and hopes. To strike hard

now that their enemy was almost within their grasp would mean more than many a long and wearisome campaign. Even the French soldiers, most of whom were fighting not so much because of their love of the American colonies as because of their hatred of England, caught a measure of the dogged determination that was manifest among officers and men.

At last, Lord Cornwallis made one more effort to escape. His sole hope lay in his plan of hurriedly taking his troops across the York River, and then, by forced marches, hastening northward before the allied armies of his enemies could follow him. The night for the venture was selected, the boats were collected, and everything was ready for the attempt. A sudden and severe storm, however, arose, and the boats were scattered. The plan was a failure.

Hoping against hope, Cornwallis now realized that the long-looked-for aid from Clinton was not to be longer expected. Surrender, apparently, was all that was left for the resolute leader and his brave followers. Still, in sheer desperation, Cornwallis strove to put off the evil day. He had never had any experience in giving up, and now he was not eager to learn. He sent messages to the American commander suggesting a truce, but General Washington

promptly refused. His own position now was one in which it was for him, not for his enemy, to dictate terms.

The next proposal of the British commander was for conferences and interviews. Even these were cut short, for Washington's one demand now was that the army of the redcoats must surrender. At last, realizing that every hope was gone, Cornwallis accepted the terms. The British forces at Yorktown surrendered on the nineteenth day of October, 1781.

The enthusiasm in the American camps was unbounded. The long weary struggle had ended at last in the fall of the redcoats. Perhaps the feeling of the soldiers was all the keener because their great commander at last had won a victory that in a measure at least atoned for the defeats at Long Island and Germantown and Brandywine. If Washington had become discouraged at the time of his early disasters and given up the struggle, what would the result have been? The settled purpose of the great leader to fight through to the end was a lesson which Noah Dare and many others never forgot, though Joseph was also fond of quoting Mad Anthony's words: "The best way to defend one's self is to attack the enemy."

The terms of the surrender naturally were eagerly discussed among the soldiers. The British officers were to be allowed to retain their side-arms, papers, and private property. The officers also were to be permitted to depart on parole. General Washington, however, refused to agree to any stipulations concerning the Tories in the armies of Cornwallis. The American commander showed his large heart and mind in what he required. There was one thing he did insist upon, however, and that was that the colors of the British should be cased. This was looked upon by the redcoats as degrading, but Washington explained that a year before this time General Lincoln, when he surrendered Charleston, had been compelled by the redcoats to do this very thing. It was now their turn, and he also selected the same General Lincoln to receive the sword which Cornwallis surrendered. All the soldiers of Cornwallis were to be kept in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania as prisoners of war. Eventually most of the men were exchanged before the treaty of peace finally was signed.

As many people as there were soldiers are said to have assembled when the act of surrender was made. On one side of the road the

American troops were drawn up and on the opposite side were the French. Upon a large white horse General Washington was stationed at the head of the American line, while Count Rochambeau, upon a bay horse, was at the head of the French troops.

Cornwallis, however, did not come in person, but sent General O'Hara to deliver his sword. Silence rested over the field as the British troops slowly marched out of their intrenchments, their colors cased, and their drums beating, and passed along the road between the American and the French columns. Many of the men were in tears — the British weeping over their defeat and the Americans for joy and the prospect of peace and independence.

Young Ensign Wilson, eighteen years of age (he had entered the American army when he was only twelve), was selected to receive the surrendered British colors. Then the army of King George laid down their arms, and when the arms had been stacked the men were led back under guard to their quarters, and soon afterward were marched to the various places where they were to be held until an exchange was made. The two thousand members of the fleet were to be the prisoners of the French admiral, De Grasse.

Early in a morning later in that October week, an honest old German, slowly pacing the streets of Philadelphia, where the Congress was in session, excited by the word which Lieutenant-Colonel Tilghman, one of Washington's aides, had just brought, paused in his march and shouted: "Basht tree oglock und Gonwallis ish dakendt!"

His broken English was understood, however, and his words spread like fire. The fall of Cornwallis meant the end of the war. America had won her independence and freedom.

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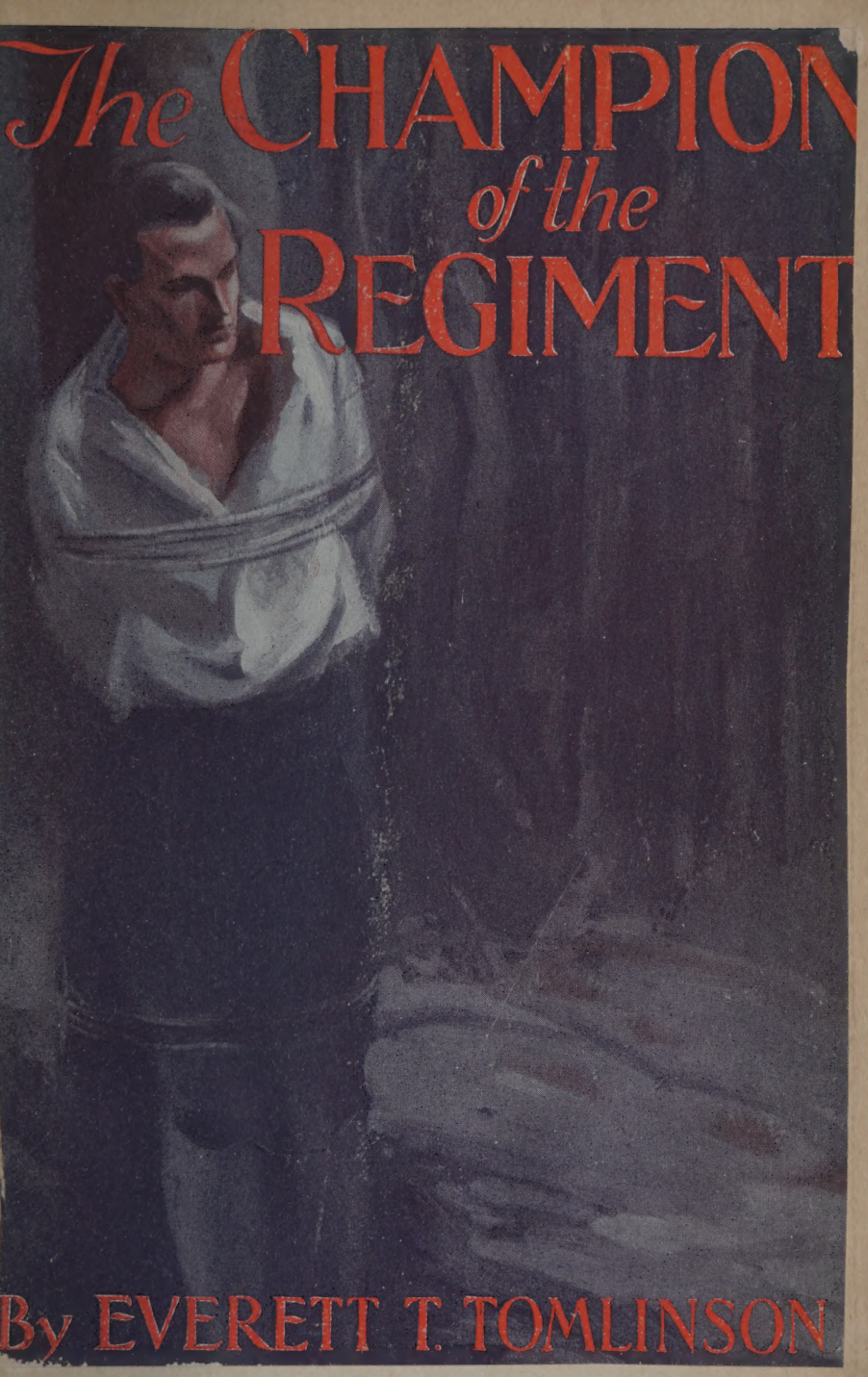
The Champion of the Regiment



By EVERETT T. TOMLINSON